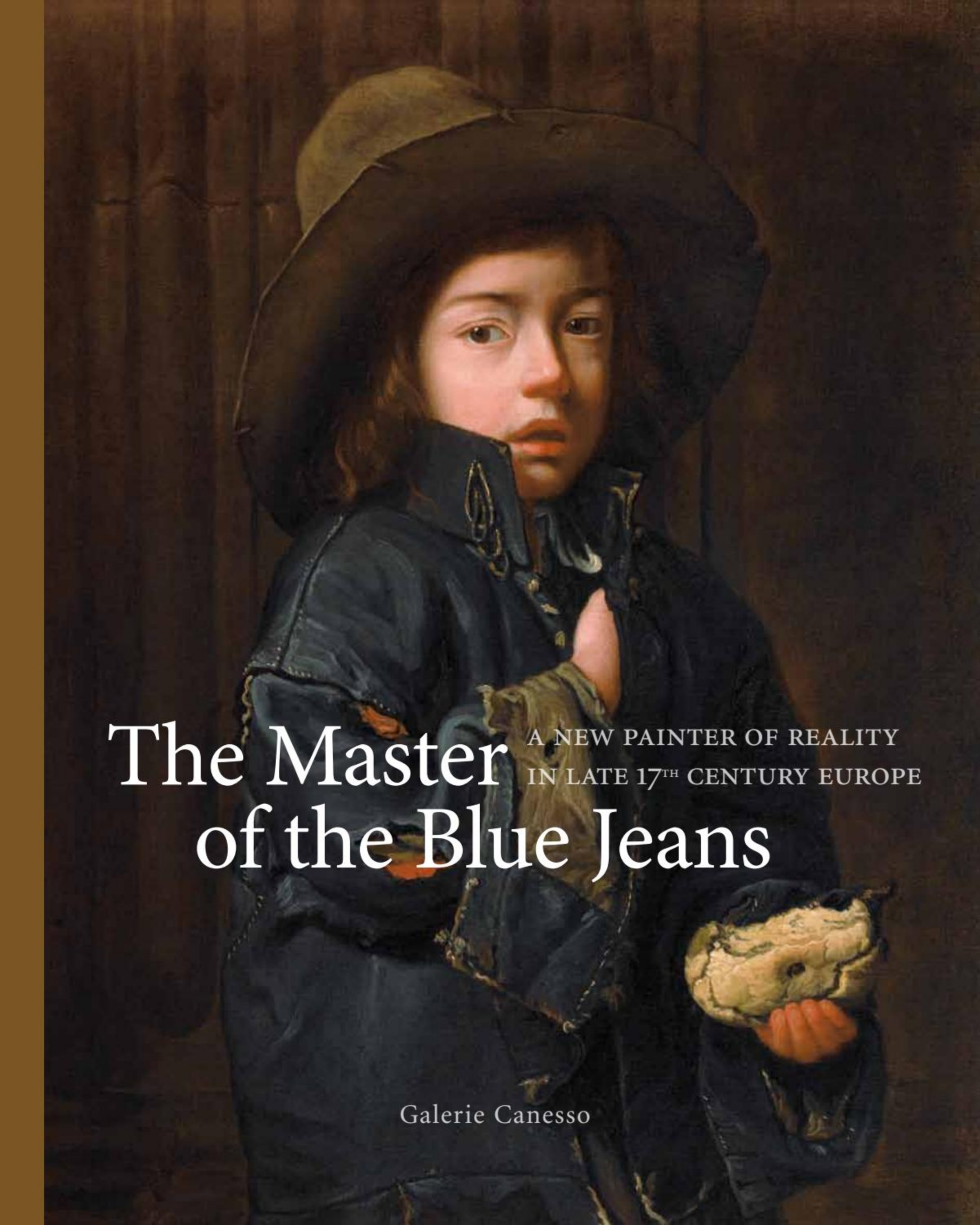


A painting of a young boy with a serious expression, wearing a dark blue jacket and a large dark hat. He is holding a small, light-colored stuffed animal in his right hand. The background is dark and textured.

# The Master of the Blue Jeans

A NEW PAINTER OF REALITY  
IN LATE 17<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY EUROPE

Galerie Canesso



# The Master of the Blue Jeans

A NEW PAINTER OF REALITY  
IN LATE 17<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY EUROPE

We warmly thank the following  
for their assistance:

Giulio Alaimo, Roberta Bartoli, Olivier Beaufils,  
Dominique Canesso, Roberto Contini,  
Frank Dabell, Francesca del Torre,  
Martina Fleischer, Arturo Galansino,  
Sabine Haag, Fabrizio Lemme,  
Laura Marazzi, Elisabeth Martin,  
Agostinho Morais, Camilla Mosconi,  
Loredana Pessa, Paolo Scotto di Castelbianco,  
Alexandra van Dongen, Nathalie Volle,  
Christian Witt-Döring, Luigi Zanzi.

Catalogue edited by Véronique Damian

Translation:

Frank Dabell, pp. 7-21, 30-61

Julia Hanna Weiss, pp. 22-28

Graphic design: François Junot.

Reproduction and printing:

Imprimerie Legovic – September 2010

© Galerie Canesso, 2010

ISBN 978-2-9529848-4-3



# The Master of the Blue Jeans

A NEW PAINTER OF REALITY  
IN LATE 17<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY EUROPE

Curated by Gerlinde Gruber

Based on a project by Véronique Damian, Francesco Frangi,  
Gerlinde Gruber and Alessandro Morandotti

Under the Patronage of the Italian Embassy in Paris

Paris, Galerie Canesso, 16 September – 6 November 2010

Galerie Canesso



# Table of Contents

|    |                                                                                                                      |
|----|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 7  | The Mystery of the Master of the Blue Jeans<br>MAURIZIO CANESSO                                                      |
| 9  | A passion for jeans<br>FRANÇOIS GIRBAUD                                                                              |
| 10 | An anonymous master known<br>as the Master of the Blue Jeans:<br>a painter of reality in Lombardy<br>GERLINDE GRUBER |
| 16 | The Master of the Blue Jeans:<br>a new painter of reality<br>FRANCESCO FRANGI and ALESSANDRO MORANDOTTI              |
| 22 | The Master of the Blue Jeans<br>and the Mystique of Blue<br>MARZIA CATALDI GALLO                                     |
|    | <b>Catalogue</b>                                                                                                     |
| 30 | Michael Sweerts (cat. 1)                                                                                             |
| 32 | Eberhard Keilhau (cat. 2)                                                                                            |
| 34 | Evaristo Baschenis (cat. 3)                                                                                          |
| 36 | The Master of the Blue Jeans (cats. 4-12)                                                                            |
| 52 | Giacomo Francesco Cipper (cat. 13)                                                                                   |
| 54 | Giacomo Ceruti (cats. 14-15)                                                                                         |
| 58 | Bibliography                                                                                                         |



# The Mystery of the Master of the Blue Jeans

MAURIZIO CANESSO

My story with the Master of the Blue Jeans began in 2004, when I bought my first painting by this artist at a public sale in New York. *The Barber's Shop*, offered as Neapolitan School in the catalogue, had formerly been the property of Wildenstein, where it was believed to be by a painter from Lorraine. Much later, when we were trying to detect its author, Alessandro Morandotti pointed out that there existed a copy of the picture in the Museo Baroffio at the Sacro Monte in Varese, which by a strange irony of fate is also where I was born. That was when the search really began.

2006 saw the publication of an article by Gerlinde Gruber in *Nuovi Studi*, in which the whole known oeuvre of this artist was gathered under the conventional name of the “Maestro della tela jeans”. The article aroused my curiosity and made me want to understand the little we know about the painter, and investigate him further. Subsequently I bought the *Woman Sewing with Two Children* (of which another version exists at the Cariplo Foundation in Milan), and then the two pictures in the Koelliker collection that had become available on the market. Using these four paintings as a starting point, I felt it would be interesting to have an exhibition on the artist, and then ultimately reunite all his known works. Two paintings published by Eeckhout in 1960 as in a collection in Imperia (Genoa) – without further details – called out for discovery, so I set out to track them down, and reached a bed and breakfast in Imperia, where the walls were adorned with these very canvases, among others. Strengthened by this discovery, I would have liked to find the painting formerly in the Cucchi collection, but there my efforts have been in vain.

Over six years, I have purchased all the available paintings recognised as by the Master of the Blue Jeans. Thus assembled, they communicate true expressive power, and a certain mystery, enhanced by the existence of replicas. All these scenes are connected solely by the depiction of “blue jeans”, a universal material which is no doubt the most widely used fabric in the world. I would like to express my gratitude to His Excellency Giovanni Caracciolo di Vietri, Italian Ambassador in Paris, who contributed significantly to the success of this initiative.

A close-up photograph of denim fabric featuring a herringbone pattern. The image shows the texture of the denim, including the waistband area with leather straps and metal buttons. The lighting highlights the intricate details of the fabric and the stitching.

MARITHÉ  
FRANÇOIS  
GIRBAUD®

**WATTWASH™**

Laser treated denim 97,5% waterfree

# A passion for jeans

FRANÇOIS GIRBAUD

I never did accept a history of jeans that claimed their birth in Genoa for Italians and Nîmes for the French. I played my part in leaving their origin in doubt for forty years, though I was well aware that this cloth was born in the textile mills of Amoskeag, New Hampshire in 1831. This is a beautiful legend and it has always fascinated me, no matter what the experts might argue.

I have devoted my life to searching for a way to domesticate the molecule that oxidises itself as it emerges from its indigo bath. Now the discovery of this anonymous master, active in Northern Italy, has unsettled all our years of research. Might Stonewash have already been invented, and its secret known by the dyers, in the seventeenth century? Did the Cathars, hunted down, yet capable of transforming base materials into gold, cross the border to get to Chiesa at the time of Philip the Fair? All this would no doubt explain the secret of “tela Genova” (Genoa, or Gênes in French, which would thus become “jeans”), and – on the road taken by these heretics, perhaps during the fifteenth century – evidence for the cloth from Nîmes (“de Nîmes”, hence “denim”).

Jeans have entered the work of the painter, and nowadays through Wattwash™ technology, they are produced by engraving the cloth itself. This technology addresses contemporary preoccupations, given our awareness of the inordinate amount of water used by the jeans industry. The process involves a 97.5 % saving of water. Light energy engraves the material, bleaches it, and offers myriad applications – even including the reproduction of tailoring techniques.

The discovery of the works by the Master of the Blue Jeans will question the very history of denim, a subject that has not found unanimous agreement among professionals and historians. I was captivated by the presence of this material in these paintings, and the idea came of using laser engraving on twenty-first-century denim. We may be separated by four centuries but today we are connected through the material. My thanks go to Maurizio Canesso who had the idea of bringing us together with this beautiful exhibition.

Art finds itself at the service of technology, and technology is sublimated by art.

# An anonymous master known as the Master of the Blue Jeans: a painter of reality in Lombardy

GERLINDE GRUBER

Sometimes the comparative study of paintings enables us to identify the style of a hitherto unknown author, without any documents to inform us of his or her identity. With practical aims in mind, it is then common to pinpoint a recurring stylistic feature by which the artist can be named. The pages that follow are dedicated to one such anonymous painter, for whom we first suggested a name in 2004 – quite anachronistic at first glance, but in fact both useful and defining in nature – the Master of the Blue Jeans.<sup>1</sup> A constant element in the group of works painted by him is the representation of a blue fabric with white threads that shows the structure of Genoese cloth, known in French as *toile de Gênes*. In seventeenth-century Italy, this type of material, produced in Genoa, Milan and Piacenza, was used for the production of clothing among the most modest social class. Because of its quality and relatively low cost, it was soon readily exported from Italy, and later named “jeans”.<sup>2</sup>

The painting discovered by Alessandro Morandotti which inspired the name of the Master of the Blue Jeans, *A Woman Begging with Two Children* (Paris, Canesso Gallery; cat. 9), was first presented in 1998 as an example of Lombard-Venetian painting<sup>3</sup> in the exhibition “Da Caravaggio a Ceruti. La pittura di genere e l’immagine dei *pitocchi* nella

pittura italiana”.<sup>4</sup> Within this tradition, our painter represents one of the paths leading to the summit of Lombard realism, the work of Giacomo Ceruti.<sup>5</sup>

The painting with the *Woman Begging with Two Children* (cat. 9) shows a woman leaning on a crutch and proffering her mendicant’s cup to the beholder with a reproachful attitude. The most worn parts of her dress reveal the characteristic form of Genoese cloth. Like the woman, her two young companions are dressed in rags – on the left a young girl and on the right a boy with a bowl in his hand. In the foreground, a pot full of embers and an earthenware jug, placed on the sloping ground that forms the lower edge of the composition, fill out the group of painted objects. The faces of the mother and girl, more clearly lit than that of the boy, emerge from a darker background, and both seem to express full awareness of their fate through the gaze they direct at the viewer.

This painting lies behind the grouping of the paintings now classified under the name Master of the Blue Jeans. The boy standing in the shadow of the beggar woman reappears in another work by the same painter, the *Beggar Boy with a Piece of Pie* (formerly Brescia, private collection, currently Paris, Canesso Gallery; cat. 4). Clothed in a torn jacket, he is depicted in front of a column, holding a piece of bread in his left hand and covering his left shoulder by passing his right hand under his jacket. The photographic library of the Fondazione Roberto Longhi contains a reproduction of this painting, which Longhi had filed under Michael Sweerts (Brussels, 1618 – Goa, 1664). This attribution gives a clear indication of the cultural milieu naturally inhabited by the Master of the Blue Jeans, in which – as Francesco Frangi has stated – Sweerts represents a “highly significant counterpoint in the portrayal of paupers” (“notevolissimo

1. Gruber, in Frangi and Morandotti, 2004, pp. 156-161; Gruber, 2006, pp. 159-170.

2. The account-books of an English tailor of 1614 mention fabrics (*fustagni*) made in “Milan” and “Geanes”. See Cataldi Gallo, 2005, pp. 15-25.

3. Since most Lombard genre painters were also active in the Veneto, we prefer not to differentiate the two cultures, given the absence of any precise information about the Master of the Blue Jeans. Only in the case of Giacomo Ceruti is it possible to distinguish the Lombard and Venetian periods of his activity.

4. Gruber, in exh. cat., Brescia, 1998-1999, p. 425, no. 90.

5. For the Italian notion of realism, see exh. cat., Milan, 1953.

contrappunto [...] della pittura pauperistica").<sup>6</sup> Our painter belongs to a trend that was crossing the whole of Europe in those years, the "painting of reality", a definition that was initially applied (as Frangi also recalls) to the Le Nain brothers.<sup>7</sup> Notably, it was to their oeuvre that pictures of uncertain attribution were most often compared.<sup>8</sup> The *Woman Begging with Two Children* and the *Beggar Boy with a Piece of Pie* are defined by an intense depiction of poverty entirely appropriate for the painting of reality.

The composition of the *Beggar Boy with a Piece of Pie* opens a window onto the possible influence of a Northern European artist who was also active in Venice and Lombardy, in this case between 1651 and 1655, before he went to Rome – Eberhard Keilhau, known as Monsù Bernardo (Elsingør, 1624 – Rome, 1687). A recurrent theme in his work is the depiction of children, as in the *Boy with a Vase of Roses*,<sup>9</sup> a similar composition, whose presence is recorded in 1721 in the Lombard collection of Giovanni Antonio Parravicino. Likewise, a painting by the Bergamo native Evaristo Baschenis (1617-1677) of a *Young Boy with a Basket of Bread and Pastries* (Milan, Mario Scaglia collection; cat. 3) shows us a young boy with an expression closely resembling that of the *Beggar Boy with a Piece of Pie*. His high-collared costume, closed with a series of braided eyelets, allows us to imagine the original appearance of the jacket (*casacca*) of the youth used as a model by the Master of the Blue Jeans. The representation of this item of clothing recalls the style of another artist who appears in Lombard collections, and about whom we still know little, Sebastianone. The swift brushstrokes, apt for showing the wear on the fabric even better than the fabric itself, bring to



Fig. 1 – Master of the Blue Jeans, *Old Woman with a Young Boy*, formerly Novara, Cucchi collection.

mind those found in his *Weeping Philosopher (Heraclitus?)*<sup>10</sup> in the Musée des Beaux-Arts, Grenoble.

The way the *Beggar Boy with a Piece of Pie* holds his shoulder echoes the injured youth in a painting attributed to Ceruti by Giuseppe Delogu in 1949,<sup>11</sup> an *Old Woman with a Young Boy* (formerly Novara, Cucchi collection; fig. 1). There, a woman is shown seated on the ground, a ceramic plate in her hand, feeding a child – or herself – with a spoon. Her right foot is bandaged. The child has a head injury and also wears a bandage, and his dirty face expresses a sense of exhaustion. Here, with his typical marked chiaroscuro, our Master appears to be more focused on showing the fabric's sculptural quality than how worn it is: the large folds on the woman's sleeve differ from those in other paintings, at least as far as one can judge from a simple photograph. For this reason the canvas should certainly be dated to a different period, even if the sad, melancholic expression of the child's face recurs precisely in the *Woman Begging with Two Children*.

The old woman represented here was probably used as a model – differently attired, though still looking at the viewer – in the *Frugal Meal with Two Children* (cat. 10). Despite its poor condition, this can also be recognized as a work by the Master of the Blue Jeans: the collar of the woman's dress and the young girl's apron are described with the same simplified folds we find elsewhere, notably in the scarf worn by the girl in the *Woman Begging with Two Children*. At the time of writing, two versions of another mealtime scene are known: the *Frugal Meal* in the Museum voor Schone Kunsten in Ghent (cat. 6), and another version of the same

10. Gruber, in exh. cat., Brescia, 1998-1999, pp. 217, 424, no. 88.

11. Present whereabouts unknown. Oil on canvas, 100 × 121 cm; see Delogu, 1949, pp. 108-114, fig. 1. There exists a copy of this composition given to Ceruti in the Pinacoteca in Sassari, Sardinia. We are grateful to Alberto Crispo for pointing this out.

6. Frangi, 1998, pp. 43-61: 54.

7. Champfleury, 1862, cited in Frangi, 1998, p. 60, note 43.

8. See the essay by Frangi and Morandotti in the present catalogue.

9. Heimbürger, 1988, p. 184, no. 65.

Fig. 2 – Anonymous,  
*The Spanish Family*, Ottawa,  
 National Gallery of Canada.



painting in the Canesso Gallery in Paris (cat. 5). The canvas in Ghent, which has already been connected with the *Frugal Meal with Two Children* by Andrea G. De Marchi and Francesca Cappelletti,<sup>12</sup> also displays the various hallmarks of the Master's style: as well as the presence of Genoese cloth, and more generally, that of worn fabrics, we find a slightly plummeting point of view, the placement of objects near the lower edge of the picture space, and a predominant use of brown pigment. There too, a woman directs her solemn gaze at the viewer. She holds a piece of bread she has just bitten and grasps a plate in her other hand, while an old man sits opposite her, feeding a young child. Although his coat has been extensively patched up, the collar emerging from it and his headgear are made of clean, intact white fabric, like that of the child, who blows onto a spoonful of rice soup to cool it down. On the tablecloth, torn in a number of places, are set a bowl of rice soup and a plate of small birds, a customary item at that time for a frugal meal in the north of Italy. This is a middle-class family, perhaps artisans.

In an article published in 1960, Paul Eeckhout suggested the possible influence of Velázquez on this painting, nonetheless noting that its author must have been active in the north of Italy.<sup>13</sup> Yet while the subject of this canvas, which depicts individuals of modest condition seated at a table, may indeed remind one of the *Bodegones* painted by Velázquez,<sup>14</sup> this must simply be a parallel instance rather than an example of direct influence. Eeckhout also brought to light a second version of this painting, which belonged to a private collection in Imperia, near Genoa, and now in the Canesso Gallery in Paris (cat. 5). For him, this provenance was further proof of the artist's Italian culture. Even if he considered the version in Imperia to be weaker than the one in Ghent, conservation has shown it to be of equally high quality. The scene is depicted from a slightly

closer viewpoint, and beyond the elements we have already mentioned, the table is shown with a few coins (?) on it, as well as a fuller plate of birds. The tear in the cloth in the foreground is also different. Beyond these small points, the two pictures show great similarities. The absolutely remarkable precision of the woman's eye in the Paris painting, with the eyeball shown as slightly moist, reveals a sense of anatomical detail which could indicate that our painter was of Northern origin.

In the same 1960 article, Eeckhout attributed one further work to the author of these paintings, *The Spanish Family*<sup>15</sup> (Ottawa, National Gallery of Canada; fig. 2), which was once regarded as the work of a Spanish painter<sup>16</sup> but which cannot be attributed to the Master of the Blue Jeans. It shows a fairly old woman, a man and a young girl seated at a table with a bowl of rice soup, a loaf of bread, some garlic, and a plate whose contents are hard to decipher. The woman is holding the man by his chin while he embraces her. The young girl is amused by this and turns to the viewer, indicating the "ill-matched couple"<sup>17</sup> with her index finger. It is quite unlikely that this was painted by the Master of the Blue Jeans. If we look carefully at the woman's hand, we can see that the structure of the veins and ligaments is far from natural, and even illogical, compared with the hand in the Ghent painting, where the description is more confident and realistic, in a passage painted with thin layers of colour; the general tone of the scene is different. In contrast, the expression of the figures in the Ottawa painting – where the main intention was to imbue the scene with a moral sense – has the appearance of a caricature. None of these figures addresses the beholder with a serious or melancholic gaze, as is habitually the case in the works by our Master.

The private collection in Imperia included a pendant to the *Frugal Meal*, classified by Eeckhout<sup>18</sup> as a copy but which we may attribute to the Master of the Blue Jeans, in spite of its poor condition: the *Woman Spinning with Two Children* (cat. 11). This is a quite successful composition, centred around an old woman holding a spindle. She is blind in one eye and seems to be in a bad mood as she turns towards the viewer. Her torn dress contrasts with the better-preserved clothing of the young boy standing next to her, who holds a stick in one hand and a receptacle in the other. He, too, turns to the viewer. Another child, who appears in the shadow of the woman and is thus harder to discern, seems to be busy adjusting his shirt. For the first time there is nothing made of Genoese cloth, although since the colour of the woman's dress appears to have altered, it could have originally been made of this fabric. The differentiation of the greys on the woman's dress and the

12. Cappelletti, 1998, pp. 302-303, fig. 9, p. 305, note 67.

13. Eeckhout, 1960, pp. 373-377.

14. On Spanish genre painting, see Wind, 1987 and Haraszti-Takács, 1983.

15. Oil on canvas, 88.5 × 92 cm. Ottawa, National Gallery of Canada, inv. 3452 (Italian painter).

16. Haraszti-Takács, 1983, pp. 214-215, no. 195 (Spanish painter [?], probably from Seville).

17. Renger, 2006, pp. 131-146.

18. Eeckhout, 1960, vol. I, p. 377, vol. II, fig. 167 a.



upper part of her apron are typical of our Master's style. Despite the sobriety of the scene, the combination of the yellow ochre of the child's coat and the red of his trousers gives the picture a sense of colour we rarely find in his other works, which are dominated by cooler brown tones with touches of blue and the occasional red.

This use of colours also provides an indication of the artist's Lombard origins and enables us to make a comparison with the youthful work of Giacomo Francesco Cipper, known as *il Todeschini* (Feldkirch, 1664 – Milan, 1736), with whom our painter shares a number of stylistic traits, such as the absence of a centralised perspective, so that the background is gently inclined; and both artists readily adopt a marked *chiaroscuro*. Suffice it to cite the *Todeschini*'s monumental *Market Scene*, which probably dates from the 1690s,<sup>19</sup> or the one dated 1703 formerly in the Geri collection (fig. 3). The same applies to the *Barber's Shop* (cat. 12), attributed by Frangi<sup>20</sup> to the Master of the Blue Jeans, whose colours also recall the style of *Todeschini*. A barber is shown attending to a seated man, the upper part of whose body is covered by a used cloth. He turns to the beholder, as does the young apprentice who assists his master holding a ceramic dish next to him. Once again, in the area of the lighter fabrics, we may note the painter's skilful use of modulation in the grey tonalities.

To the group of works currently identified as by Master of the Blue Jeans we may add another painting, also attributed to our painter by Francesco Frangi<sup>21</sup> and which exists in two versions, one in Milan and the other, formerly in

Madrid, now with the Canesso Gallery in Paris: the *Woman Sewing with Two Children* (cat. 7 and 8). Both versions represent the same interior, with a woman sitting on the ground sewing in front of a carved wooden child's bed with a sleeping infant wrapped in swaddling clothes. Behind the bed, a young child somewhat like the *Beggar Boy with a Piece of Pie* holds his head with an air of embarrassment. In the version in Paris, he wears a sort of bonnet with a feather in it. Again, the figures stand out clearly against a dark, undifferentiated background – the interior space of the room they inhabit remains invisible. Its depth is defined solely by the successive placement of the still life and the bed, behind which we see the seated boy. The description of the woman's needlework, with simple contrasts between shaded areas and the brighter parts of the fabric, brings to mind the work of Antonio Cifrondi (Clusone, 1656 – Brescia, 1730), as seen in his *Saint Peter* in Bergamo, painted in 1701,<sup>22</sup> or his *Woman Sewing* in Brescia (fig. 4).<sup>23</sup> Cifrondi's early work (which still begs certain questions) offers points of resemblance in how the two artists treat figures.<sup>24</sup> Having spent time in France, according to some sources, he is sometimes considered – together with Pietro Bellotti, whose presence

22. In the church of Santo Spirito. See Dal Poggetto, 1982, p. 422, 474, no. 34.

23. In the Pinacoteca Tosio Martinengo. See Dal Poggetto, 1982, pp. 455, 485, no. 79.

24. Compare the face of the *Woman Begging with Two Children* with that of the *Peasant with a Beret* (Lovere, Accademia Tadini) by Cifrondi, painted in the 1680s (Dal Poggetto, 1982, pp. 402, 502, no. 137). Both have a turned-up nose with a reflection on the tip of the bridge. In the work of Cifrondi, the scarf worn by the peasant is described with the same simplification as the collars and folds of clothing painted by the Master of the Blue Jeans.



Fig. 3 – Giacomo Francesco Cipper, called *il Todeschini*, *Market Scene*, formerly Milan, Geri collection.

Fig. 4 – Antonio Cifrondi, *Woman Sewing*, Brescia, Pinacoteca Tosio-Martinengo.

19. Gruber, in exh. cat., Brescia, 1998-1999, p. 427, no. 94.

20. The attribution of this painting to the Master of the Blue Jeans by Frangi is taken up again in Damian, 2006, pp. 56-59.

21. Frangi, 2000, II, pp. 1145-1162.

in France has also been presumed<sup>25</sup> – as a “missing link” between the French realist style of the seventeenth century and Lombard-Venetian painting of that time. This could provide a significant explanation as to why the Master of the Blue Jeans has often been regarded as a French painter. Following Federico Zeri’s opinion along these lines, the *Woman Sewing with Two Children* was originally published as a French work.<sup>26</sup> Yet there is a specific technical point to bear in mind here, found in the *Beggar Boy with a Piece of Pie* and reflecting Lombard culture, namely the accentuation of the contours of the eyes by a stroke of light pigment painted over an initial dark ground. The same technique recurs in the portraits by the Milanese painter Carlo Donelli, known as il Vimercati (1661-1715), for instance in his *Portrait of a Boy with a Dog* (Milan, Koelliker collection; fig. 5).<sup>27</sup>

In the absence of biographical data for the Master of the Blue Jeans, it is difficult to establish a precise chronology of his works; only his stylistic evolution can allow us to set down a few points of reference. Thus, a tendency towards a simplification of folds, described by light brushstrokes that sketch out surface decoration, becomes accentuated as the painter evolves. The depiction of drapery, still voluminous in the *Old Woman with a Young Boy* (fig. 1) – where this tendency is only visible here and there – would thus appear to be the sign of a youthful work. Among the later works, one could include the two versions of *The Frugal Meal*, the *Woman Sewing with Two Children* and the *Barber’s Shop* scene, where this simplification becomes much more marked. Parallel to this is a remarkable evolution in the description of flesh, visible if we compare the finely described face of the *Beggar Boy with a Piece of Pie*, or that of the boy in the *Woman with a Boy*, with the relatively dry appearance of the figures in the *Barber’s Shop*. This last picture is perhaps the culmination of a stylistic development that began with the *Beggar Boy with a Piece of Pie*.

In his choice of subjects as much as the realism of their depiction, the Master of the Blue Jeans demonstrates a true originality: his *Barber* no longer involves the classic scene of the tooth-puller, known and favoured by painters from Lucas van Leyden onwards, nor a surgical

operation, another type of scene that was often painted in the seventeenth century. The barber is actually shown focused on the head of his client. Likewise, the *Woman with a Boy* (fig. 1), the *Woman with Two Children at Table* or again the *Woman Sewing with Two Children* illustrate new iconographical subjects. This is a domain where the artist displays not only innovation but a remarkable sense of observation for situations, characters and clothing.<sup>28</sup> Committed to painting individuals of modest origins who are fully aware of their condition and busy with the most quotidian tasks, our painter may be seen as an important precursor of Ceruti.

That the artist’s works belong to the genre of “painting of reality” cannot be doubted today. Besides, the traits we have seen they have in common with other works of Lombard-Venetian culture would suggest our painter sojourned in Lombardy, probably in Milan in the last quarter of the seventeenth century.

As the seventeenth century progressed, the representation of the poor became an increasingly complex genre, and it is sometimes difficult to interpret artists’ intentions: the border between the image of a beggar/thief, evocative of scorn, and a figure who may prompt a bourgeois viewer to perform an act of generosity, tends to become blurred.<sup>29</sup> The *Woman Begging with Two Children* is the only painting by the Master of the Blue Jeans which bears signs of that ambivalence of character. Recent conservation of this canvas brought back to light a piece of bread sticking out of the young girl’s apron, thus potentially contradicting the mendicant gesture made by the woman and the young boy. A negative interpretation of this painting would however stand in opposition to the habitual neutrality adopted by our painter in his depiction of characters of equal condition; but since we lack any kind of information regarding patrons or collectors, it is difficult to pass precise judgement on the subject. Limiting ourselves, therefore, to the direct study of these pictures and the numerous points of stylistic connection we have found to other Lombard painters active around 1700, we can at least offer one hypothesis: that the work of our anonymous artist represents a highly significant phase of Lombard realism.

Fig. 5 – Carlo Donelli, called Il Vimercati, *Portrait of a Young Man with a Dog*, Milan, Koelliker collection

25. In his biography of Cifrondi published in 1793, Tassi refers to a sojourn made by the painter in Grenoble and Paris when he was young; see Dal Poggetto, 1982, p. 359-360. Bellotti is also said to have spent time in France during the 1660s; see Anelli, 1996, pp. 80-81, and Frangi, 1998-1999, pp. 54, 60.

26. Colace, in Gatti-Perer, 1998, pp. 226-229, no. 107.

27. Frangi and Morandotti, 2004, pp. 168-171.

28. See the essay by Marzia Cataldi Gallo in the present catalogue.

29. Nichols, 2007, pp. 230-244.



# The Master of the Blue Jeans: a new painter of reality

FRANCESCO FRANGI and ALESSANDRO MORANDOTTI

A brief review of the attributional vagaries of many of the paintings presented in this exhibition, dedicated to a painter whose biographical identity still eludes us, is highly instructive. The “errors” made by scholars of the past, who were well aware of the “intelligenza delle maniere” (as Luigi Lanzi defined the work of the connoisseur), in fact play an important role – even in an approximate way – in defining the period and culture inhabited by an artist whose outline is still rather shapeless.

Michael Sweerts was the name that came to Roberto Longhi’s mind for the *Beggar Boy with a Piece of Pie* (cat. 4), and Federico Zeri recalled the Le Nain brothers for the *Mother Sewing with Two Children* (cat. 7), while the case of the *Frugal Meal* (cat. 6), in the Museum in Ghent since 1905 – the only painting attributed to our master housed both then and now in a public collection – involved an extraordinary weather-vane of opinions (or counter-opinions), starting with a shower of proposals in the first decade of the twentieth century. Reading through the letters and notes archived by the Ghent curators, one comes across the names of various stars and leading players of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century European schools of painting, not to mention a panoply of international art historians (Gruber 2006). For the *Frugal Meal*, Roberto Longhi thought of a French painter (1953), while other scholars suggested the circle of Velázquez, and René Huyghe (1948), with Ferdinando Bologna (1951) in swift consent, wrote these pithy words to the director of the Flemish museum: “c’est un artiste qui tient à mi-chemin de Todeschini et de Giacomo Ceruti. Toutefois sa technique plus rapide révèle qu’il est d’une génération antérieure à ces deux peintres”.

We can thus follow – even in this quick sketch of the critical fortunes of an artist we now conventionally recognise as the Master of the Blue Jeans – the emergence of all his ancestors on an illustriously-rooted family tree; and we can understand the anonymous master’s enrolment (albeit with

a provisional name) in the prestigious register of painters of reality, as defined by twentieth-century study of European painting of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

In a perfect and almost natural sequence, the key stages of this extraordinary period of scholarly research made their appearance in two emblematic exhibitions, different in both size and undertaking, held in Paris in 1934 (*Les Peintres de la réalité en France au XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, organised by Paul Jamot and Charles Sterling) and Milan in 1953 (*I pittori della realtà in Lombardia*, organised by Roberto Longhi).

From the very introduction to his catalogue, Longhi declared his debt to the earlier exhibition, at least in the “formula dell’intitolazione” (which says a good deal), even if the chronological and geographical parameters of the two events were quite distinct. The 1934 exhibition at the Orangerie saw the display of the seventeenth-century French painters who preferred the “passion du vrai” over “intellectualité”, as Paul Jamot wrote in the preface to the catalogue; those seen in 1953 at the Palazzo Reale were the Lombard masters of the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries who countered the artifice of Mannerism and the Baroque with “una certa calma fiducia di potere esprimere direttamente, senza mediazioni stilizzanti, la ‘realtà’ che sta intorno”, as Longhi wrote in his introduction. The issue here was not to establish an exhaustive history of art of those centuries, but rather to point out the existence, within the artistic events that shaped those geographical areas, of a stylistic continuity, an invaluable and strong guiding thread whose defining characteristic lay in the direct representation of natural data and fidelity to objective truth.

It is surprising to see how certain critical definitions echo one another in the brief introductory texts – how works by painters distant in time and place could be defined with similar words, and with those words alone, reflecting a widespread sensibility in the Europe of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. “L’art simple et franc” (and, in

a variant phrase, “L’art simple et grave”) of the Le Nain brothers – the heroes, with Georges de la Tour, of the 1934 show – finds linguistic counterparts in Longhi’s felicitous use of hendiadys (“semplicità accostante”, “penetrante attenzione”), used to define the phenomenon of painting of reality in Lombardy between Giovan Battista Moroni and Giacomo Ceruti (Longhi 1953). This is not the context for a study of the reciprocal influences between the French and Italian giants of twentieth-century historiography, ready to stride along a common path, albeit with different views of the inevitability of Caravaggio’s antecedence in investigating even the humblest reality. For Jamot the great Lombard painter was only a “choc extérieur”, while for Longhi “soltanto dopo che il Caravaggio aveva capovolto in umano il modo di interpretare gli argomenti sacri ci si poteva dar coraggio di rappresentare, non come divagazione pittoresca (Bassano) e come ‘genere’ (fiamminghi e olandesi), ma con piena dedizione all’argomento, una ‘Famiglia di contadini’” (Longhi 1935). Longhi certainly had in mind the *Peasant Family* by Louis or Antoine Le Nain, in the Louvre since 1915 (fig. 1), “peint simplement avec une profonde sympathie humaine”, as one reads in the 1934 catalogue entry.

Moreover, it was hardly fortuitous that the France of Courbet’s realist manifesto of 1855 also saw the conscious and contemporaneous rediscovery of Caravaggio (but also of Velázquez and Ribera), coinciding almost exactly with that of French painters of reality like Le Nain. This enthusiasm for ancient and modern painting that treated reality also spread in a similar way to critical studies (Planché, Laviro, Thoré, Champfleury, Baudelaire, Zola) and artistic production (Courbet, Manet), ahead of the 1934 exhibition at the Orangerie.

Longhi, too, was aware of the thrust of critical debate, both historic and contemporary; indeed he was in the thick of it as a militant critic, using *Paragone* in 1957 to host the lively polemic between Realism and New Romanticism (with

Renato Guttuso as mentor) and informal Impressionism (with Francesco Arcangeli as augur). Furthermore, from the earliest days of his studies on Caravaggio and his circle, Longhi understood the pan-European range of this kind of painting, in which reality was interpreted more with personal sensitivity than faithful replication. Suffice it to quote his withering assessment of a painting displayed in the 1953 show, the *Young Boy with a Basket of Bread and Pastries* by Evaristo Baschenis (present again in the current privately-organised exhibition; cat. 3), “dove diresti che, rivisitata la canestra del Caravaggio a Milano, il Baschenis si provi a rassomigliare a un Vermeer (e forse non gli riesce che uno Sweerts), sacrificatosi in provincia cattolica” (Longhi 1953).

Connecting back to what was said in our opening lines, we should not conclude that the fluctuating authorship of the pictures now given to the Master of the Blue Jeans – the Seville of Velázquez, the France of the Le Nains, the “Flemish” Rome of Sweerts, and the Lombardy of Ceruti – is in any way exceptional in the field of “pauper paintings” of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, almost a field of its own for the masters who observed the reality that surrounded them.

A study of the research on this special chapter in the history of European painting, including some of the most important writings, will reveal how scholarship has veered off course in similar ways (and continues to do so) in seeking to narrow the focus on other artists and their works. This much is clear from the fact that until the decisive rediscovery of “Monsù Bernardo” (the Danish painter Eberhart Keilhau) by Roberto Longhi (1938), many of his works were attributed to Spanish artists such as Herrera the Elder, Mazo, Murillo, and even Velázquez – to the extent that Hermann Voss, who had initially seen a resemblance to the Roman *bamboccianti* Antonio Amorosi, defined him “der falsche Spanier” (1912). For an even clearer understanding of the difficulties involved in the study of European paintings with popular themes,



Fig. 1 – Louis or Antoine Le Nain, *Peasant Family in an Interior*, Paris, Musée du Louvre.



Fig. 2 – Giacomo Ceruti,  
*A Beggar*, Göteborg,  
Kunstmuseum.

Fig. 3 – Giacomo Ceruti,  
*Three Beggars*, Madrid,  
Thyssen-Bornemisza  
Museum.

it may be useful to consider the turbulent critical itinerary of some of Giacomo Ceruti's finest works, starting with the half-length *Beggar* in the Kunstmuseum, Göteborg (fig 2). Before being established as part of the Milanese painter's oeuvre in 1973, it was included in the 1934 Paris exhibition of *Peintres de la réalité* with a hesitant attribution to Jean Michelin, an important member of the Le Nains' close circle. On the other hand, one of the most moving masterpieces by Ceruti, the *Three Beggars* in the Thyssen-Bornemisza Museum, Madrid (fig 3), had a long-standing, direct attribution to Louis or Antoine Le Nain; the correct authorship of the painting was only recognised in 1963 through the intuition of Carlo Volpe, and the idea subsequently enabled the work to be identified as one of three canvases painted in 1736 by the artist for Marshal Matthias von der Schulenburg, a passionate supporter of European genre painting in the second quarter of the eighteenth century. One's thoughts turn to one of the first great minds to treat Ceruti's career, Giuseppe Delogu, whose reaction to the Padernello cycle (from which two works are in the present exhibition, thanks to the generosity of the Lechi family and that of an anonymous lender; cat. 14 and 15) invoked the painter's artistic genealogy, still so hard to clarify at that time: "Egli trova forse nella storia un solo esempio di lontana parentela ideale in Luigi le Nain e più tardi in Chardin" (Delogu 1931).

Looking at a slightly earlier period, basically contemporaneous with that of our anonymous painter, there are some even more problematic cases, such as the critical fortunes of two enigmatic late seventeenth-century masterpieces of the pauper genre: the *Old Peasant Woman with a Boy*, formerly in the collection of the Marqueses de Casa Torres in Madrid (fig 5), and the so-called *Outdoor Scene with Peasants* (Cremona, private collection; fig 4).

Traditionally regarded as by Velázquez, the Casa Torres painting was in fact ascribed in 1940 by August Liebman Mayer, the expert on the great Spanish master, to the peripatetic Lombard-Venetian Pietro Bellotti. The attribution enjoyed a certain consensus, but in 1965 this did not stop Nicola Ivanoff from placing it within the circle of Georges de la Tour – a useful way of highlighting the doubts relating to the exact stylistic placement of this work, which still calls for a plausible classification. Similar as regards uncertain identity is the *Outdoor Scene with Peasants*, hailed on its appearance in the 1960s as a masterpiece by Giacomo Ceruti (Morassi 1967; Zeri 1976) and then associated with Pietro Bellotti (Frangi 1993) before being rerouted, on Zeri's suggestion, towards an unspecified Franco-German area of the seventeenth century (Anelli 1996). A veritable European tour, then, very recently extended by a further leg – most likely not its last – that saw the picture make a surprise appearance in the oeuvre of Franz Werner Tamm, a painter of German origin known above all for his still life paintings (Gregori 2010).

What is most surprising in this review of the literature is how varied these attributions are, within truly broad parameters of time and especially place, each calling for the recognition of specific challenges faced by scholars addressing the painting of popular subjects. Among the causes of these diverging views – some of which have involved the finest of connoisseurs – we must surely include the fact that it has taken much longer than usual for historians to pay attention to this area of figurative art and identify its multiple protagonists, penalized as they are by the persistent silence they have faced in early art-historical literature. Some of these painters, such as the Tyrolean Ulrich Glantschnigg, the Slovenian Almanach, the "Lombard"





Fig. 4 – Anonymous (end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century), *Outdoor Scene with Peasants*, Cremona, private collection



Fig. 5 – Anonymous (end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century), *Old Peasant Woman with a Boy*, Madrid, formerly in the collection of the Marqueses de Casa Torres.

Giuseppe Romani, or indeed the Master of the Blue Jeans, have only been rediscovered in the last few years, clearly implying that anyone intending to venture into this area of research has a vast terrain before them.

However, one has the feeling that there is a further motive for the disorientation we have just outlined, something to be found in the singular and unpredictable affinities that exist between the diverse expressions of the pauper genre of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, even when these emerge in areas distant from one another, thus making any direct link between the relative artists highly improbable.

Part of the justification for such parallels, which can sometimes blur (at least to our eyes) the boundaries between the various figurative traditions, obviously comes from certain choices of style and iconography – imposed, so to speak, by the genre itself – such as the accent put on the humble social identity of the sitters and the world they inhabit, not to mention the necessary insistence on the wretched material details of their daily existence. Yet the most important thing to notice is how these surprising cross-fertilisations occur above all among the painters who belong to the most exalted tradition of popular painting: the line that goes from Velázquez and La Tour to Ceruti, passing through the Le Nain brothers and Sweerts and a handful of others, and including – we may now affirm – the painter around whom this exhibition is organised.

Brought to light in the writings of Charles Sterling, Vitale Bloch and Roberto Longhi, and then more precisely defined in its concrete manifestations by Giuliano Briganti and Mina Gregori, this aspect of “pauper painting” stands out above all for its refusal to go into the comic or anecdotal, or make use of the allegorical elements which so often find their way into the genre discussed here. Instead of these

qualities – fundamental as they are to the history of collecting popular subjects – the leading artists in question adopted another approach, one of gravitas and commitment, in which a deep human sympathy for the arduous living conditions of the lower classes went hand in hand with the use of a highly realistic tone, uncompromising in its investigation of those individuals and lucid in its depiction of their indigence, but also of their naked dignity. The sequence that leads from the Seville paintings of Velázquez (fig 6; Edinburgh, National Galleries of Scotland) and the almost contemporary *Peasant Couple Eating Peas* by La Tour (fig 7) to the peasant interiors of the Le Nains and finally Ceruti’s Padernello cycle offers a visual journey across the finest and most characteristic landmarks of this movement, enabling us to witness the emergence of an intimate, underlying continuity; and it is worth dwelling on this for a moment.

This guiding thread is as ethical in nature as it is figurative, and is found in a shared propensity for a language of solemn cadence that adapts its medium to the subjects treated, first and foremost through a sober, essential palette, appropriate for a credible rendering of the dusty universe of beggars and humble workers. An objective, dry gaze lies behind the frank investigation of their clothing, almost always torn, of their poor quotidian objects, their faces marked by deprivation, and their gnarled hands – all contributing to the spread of an almost obsessive exercise in naturalism, as well as an intense expressive rhythm that corresponds with the painful existential experiences narrated in these canvases. All these requirements involve giving up any purely stylistic satisfaction, and especially one’s personal figurative culture: both must be sacrificed, in favour of a genuine adherence to objective data, devoid of any protective filters.

Fig. 6 – Diego Velázquez,  
*An Old Woman Cooking Eggs*,  
Edinburgh, National Galleries  
of Scotland.

Fig. 7 – Georges de La Tour,  
*Peasant Couple Eating Peas*,  
Berlin, Staatliche Museen  
zu Berlin, Gemäldegalerie.



Considering the doubts that continue to be cast on many of the authors of numerous paintings of what may be called popular subject-matter, it should hardly surprise us that – as with many of his contemporaries in this field – the question of the Master of the Blue Jeans comes with more than one enigma in its wake, regarding not only the artist's biographical identity but also his geographical origins. While a number of clues suggest that a substantial part of the painter's career developed in Lombardy at the end of the seventeenth century, there are equally solid reasons for believing he was trained elsewhere, though our current knowledge makes it difficult to express sufficient arguments in support of this opinion.

What is true of the finest painters who depicted the poor also applies to our Master: the concentrated rigour of his realism, the sobriety of his pictorial handling, and the fact that he never yielded to any adornment, all make the art historian's task not a little complicated. We should rejoice, then, in the knowledge that this exhibition has brought back to life a great and empathetic narrator of the sufferings of the humble; the next challenge will be to detect which corner of Europe saw the unfolding of this story before it took hold in the Lombard territories that were preparing to welcome Giacomo Ceruti. A truly ambitious project would have used many of the paintings we have discussed here to enrich this exhibition – although of course it has its own precise identity – so as to put certain comparisons to the test, and evaluate the stature of this master, of whom we are in one sense the parents, while Gerlinde Gruber is the nurse who has lovingly nourished and raised him. To Maurizio Canesso, his agent, we owe the idea of assembling his works, in order to make them known – with the indispensable assistance of Véronique Damian – to a wider public.



# The Master of the Blue Jeans and the Mystique of Blue

MARZIA CATALDI GALLO

The identity of the Master of the Blue Jeans is still a mystery, however, the descriptive name derives from the bright blue cloth we see in his paintings. His predilection for cotton and blue does not arouse interest because it is an unusual combination. On the contrary. As we shall see, blue was one of the main colours used in working class clothing from the early seventeenth century on. The reason for his fame is that the different shades of blue he uses to dress his figures acquire a particular vitality in the dark, confined interiors where he places his woeful subjects.

As we seek an understanding of the reasons that prompted the painter to put such emphasis on the “cloth-and-blue” binomial we should look in two directions: first the spread of cotton fabrics and then the history, appeal and popularity of blue dyes.

As opposed to fine silks made for an elite clientele, cotton fabrics satisfied the needs of the large general population; they became widespread during the early Middle Ages and this popularity has not waned up to the present. Many sources, starting in the twelfth century, speak of the scope and intensity of trade in cotton textiles – and mainly Italian products – throughout Europe.

The boom in cotton fabrics was largely motivated by the fear of recurring famines that led to the conversion of many pastures to farmland for raising food crops. Starting in the second half of the twelfth century, sheep pastures began to disappear from Italy’s Po Valley and wool became increasingly expensive, not only in Italy, but all over Europe.<sup>1</sup>

To remedy this situation attempts were made to produce mixed – or blended – fabrics using the smallest possible amounts of wool: the *medielane* that were woven either with wool and cotton or wool and linen. But later production turned to making sturdy cotton fabrics such as fustian.

1. Borlandi, 1953, pp. 134 ff.

Cotton was preferred over linen because it is warmer and also because the land used to grow flax was unproductive for years after the crops were harvested. Therefore, dedicating land to flax growing at a time when famine was a constant threat was indeed a dangerous proposition.<sup>2</sup>

We can also add that although cotton was less durable than linen – especially coarse linen, it did offer some advantages in terms of comfort, ease of care, feel and, to use a current expression, its “look”. Different finishing methods made it possible to create more diversity than possible with wool or linen cloths, and cotton could be dyed bright colours. This was highly valued by people for whom colours and their intensity had both symbolic and real meanings: styles and hues conveyed a great deal of information about the wearer’s age, personal condition, social standing and state of mind.<sup>3</sup>

Acquisition of the raw material needed to produce the stuffs that were woven in all Northern Italian cities and exported abroad was facilitated by the great ports of Venice and Genoa. Raw cotton grown in Syria and Egypt landed in Venice, while Genoa was the point of arrival for North African and Southern Italian (from Sicily and Calabria) cottons that were of poorer quality with respect to the Middle Eastern varieties.

The best, long fibre cotton was called *bambagia* from the Greek *bambákion*, the less fine type from North Africa was known as “cotton” from the Arabic word *qutūn*.<sup>4</sup>

The significant production of mixed, or blended, textiles tells us that Italian manufacturing was oriented towards the sale of sturdy, low priced fabrics suitable for everyday clothing and furnishings, especially draperies

2. Fennell Mazzaoui, 1981, p. 89.

3. Muzzarelli, 2000, p. 15, chap. III-IV.

4. Cataldi Gallo, 2005, pp. 15-33; Cataldi Gallo, 2007a, pp. 7-9 with bibliography.

and bedding. The Italian entrepreneurs preferred focusing on making attractive, reasonably priced fabrics that they could easily sell throughout Europe.<sup>5</sup>

The most popular of the many “new” fabrics now available to the less affluent included *bombasine* (cotton and hemp), *terlici* (cotton, linen and hemp), *burdi* (from the Turkish city of Bursa – that could be plain, striped or chequered), *valesi* (*valesii*, *valesci* that were similar to *terlici*), and the striped *acordolati*. But the most popular of all textiles made in Italy was definitely fustian, and we shall come back to this because fustian is the origin of the word *jeans*.

In the Venetian area, and in a broad sense, in Lombardy, there were other popular fabrics in addition to fustian. They were known as *pignolati*, a term that was used in Lombard dialect up through the nineteenth century to identify a cotton cloth with a small, pine-nut shaped pattern.<sup>6</sup>

According to some scholars the word fustian comes from Medieval Latin, *fustaneum* from *fustis* meaning wood from a tree which in turn is derived from the Greek *xylina lina* essentially “wool tree” that is similar to the modern German *Baumwolle*<sup>7</sup>. Others believe that the name comes from a district in Cairo known as Fustat or Fostat<sup>8</sup>; but this hypothesis is considered doubtful because of Egypt’s minor role in cotton cloth manufacturing<sup>9</sup>, and still others say that this was where cottons imported from India were sorted.<sup>10</sup> The Arab word *fustan* has also been considered among the possible etymological roots as it was used to indicate a heavy cotton cloth with a linen warp.

In the Middle Ages the word fustian described a cotton and wool, or linen, blend cloth. As time passed, it was used more specifically to define the structure of the cloth, that is a cotton weft and linen warp. However, we must remember that each city followed its own rules and because of the specific features of its fabrics, fustians were generally known by the name of the city of provenance. This fact is a particularly important piece in the puzzle of the birth of jeans.

It does not seem that the actual warp-and-weft structure played any fundamental role in defining the fabric. From what we can gather both cloths with a tabby weave, that is a 1 to 1 ratio of warp and weft and those with a diagonal weave were called fustian. It is possible that the pile-like surface effect obtained by hand-carding with a thistle (the Italian word for thistle is *cardo*)<sup>11</sup>, was a feature common to all fustian cloths.

Diagonally woven (twill) cloths were sturdier and draped better than tabby weaves, therefore they were in greater demand for both clothing and bedding.<sup>12</sup> To clear the field of a recurring ambiguity, it is important to note that the textile industry in Nîmes also specialized in a particularly sturdy woollen fabric with a twill weave, and then in the eighteenth century made cotton cloths with the same features. Textiles from Nîmes did very well on the markets, this led to product diversification and prompted the city’s merchants to turn abroad – especially to the flourishing English market. Sales points were opened in two key cities, Cadiz and Genoa, in order to serve foreign markets; Genoa was the departure point for goods destined for North America and the Levant. When textile manufacturing was begun in Baltimore in the late 1780s, the two words – *jeans* from Genoa and *denim* from Nîmes – did not overlap, they coexisted. *Jeans* was cloth used for work clothes in general while *denim* was coarser and was for over-garments such as smocks or overalls.<sup>13</sup>

The advent of fustian and other cotton-blend cloths marked a turning point, or better, a revolution in trade. The huge variety of cotton textiles could satisfy the needs of customers with different tastes and budgets.<sup>14</sup> However, the key moment for the “birth” of jeans was around the second half of the sixteenth century when Genoese fustians were going through a crisis having lost a considerable share of the domestic and foreign markets.

In order to close the circle concerning the fabric’s origins we must consider two factors: the quality of Genoese fustian at the time and the large-scale use of the cloth on the English market.

Compared with products from other Italian cities, Genoese fustian was somewhere in the middle: it was of lower quality than the fabrics made in Piacenza and Milan; and it differed from the Neapolitan cloth that was woven with wool and therefore heavier. The Genoese cloth was also in the middle in terms of cost vis à vis stuffs made in other Italian cities or in German towns such as Ulm.<sup>15</sup> Paradoxically, it was the medium quality and reasonable cost that led to Genoa’s name being linked to what has been the world’s best known fabric for over a century.

“The wearing of fustians is lately grown to more use as may seem than ever it was before time.”<sup>16</sup> Between the middle of the sixteenth century and the beginning of the seventeenth English fashions underwent a most radical change, especially insofar as the search for new, attractive and inexpensive fabrics was concerned. Fustian seemed to satisfy all these needs since fine cloth was very expensive. For three hundred years before local industry developed in Lancashire during the early years of the seventeenth century, England had been playing an important role in European commerce

5. Fennell Mazzaoui 1981, p. 90.

6. Fennell Mazzaoui 1981, pp. 90 ff. and Glossary in Ericani and Frattaroli, 1993, p. 55. On fustian production in the Genoese colony of Pera, cf. Fennell Mazzaoui 1981, p. 198.

7. Fennell Mazzaoui 1981, note on p. 199.

8. Gentile, 1981, pp. 65-66; Hardouin-Fugier, Berthod, Chavent-Fusaro 1994, *futaine* p. 199.

9. Fennell Mazzaoui 1981, p. 90 and note p. 199.

10. Anquetil 1999, p. 18, in this regard, we must note that Genoese merchants were doing business in Egypt as early as 1060: Jacoby, 1999, p. 11.

11. Silvestrini, 1989, p. 61.

12. Nougarede, in exh. cat. 1989, pp. 32-34.

13. Gorguet-Ballesteros, 1994, pp. 25-38.

14. Fennell Mazzaoui 1981, p. 93.

15. *Ibid.*, p. 198.

16. The phrase is from a 1597-1598 document, cf. Wadsworth – De Lacy Mann, 1965, p. 21.

in these items; the English had been steadily importing fustians since the thirteenth century. A document dated 1495 reads: "...fustians brought from the parts beyond the seas unshorn into this realm have been, and should be, the most profitable cloth for doublets and for other wearing cloths, greatly used among the common people of this realm."<sup>17</sup>

The two most popular varieties in England were fustian from Ulm and from Genoa that were known as "Holmes" and "jean" (or "jeans"), respectively. A 1614 bill from a Lancashire tailor shows the use of "Milan" and "Geanes" fustian; records of the port of London document large scale imports of Holmes, Jeane, Milan and Augsburg fustians between 1587-1589.<sup>18</sup> During that period, Genoa fustian – used for linings and bedding – was slightly more expensive than the English cloth and considerably cheaper than the fabric from Ulm.<sup>19</sup> It is clear that the middling quality and moderate price of fustian from Genoa, which though interpreted as signs of poor manufacturing in the Republic, did in fact, sanction its unpredictable success. If the lower and middles classes were the marketing targets, we must note that even the aristocrats were attracted by the versatility of cotton. However, the wealthy used the cotton textiles mainly for furnishings – draperies, curtains and bedding, while the lower classes used them for clothing.<sup>20</sup>

If we turn our attention to the seventeenth century we can, with reasonable confidence, say that cotton fabrics were widespread among the less prosperous classes throughout Europe and that they preferred fustian above all. Starting from the mid-sixteenth century in England it was called *jeans* because of its Genoese provenance, but it was not necessarily blue!

Now, if we turn to the matter of blue dyes during that century we have two key elements: the widespread use of blue in European working class clothing and the liveliness of blue cloths as we can see in painting starting from about the middle of the seventeenth century.

Blue was commonly used for working class clothing throughout Europe, and especially in Flanders, Spain, Italy and France, and – given the lack of conserved textiles - we can see this in seventeenth century paintings depicting genre scenes or groups of lower-middle class figures.

Taking Flanders, for example in the painting *Country Wedding*, by Jan Brueghel the Elder, dated around 1612 (Madrid, Prado Museum, inv. P01441), there are 16 more or less bright blue cotton aprons, three pairs of breeches and three pairs of gaiters. In the *Market Scene with Washerwoman*, attributed to Joos de Momper the Younger and Jan Brueghel the Elder, dated between 1620-1622 (also in the Prado Museum, inv. 1443; fig. 1) we can see the bright blue cloths laid out to dry, and the same colour in the

washerwomen's aprons – there are twelve – and some of the other female figures are also wearing blue doublets.

Even later Flemish painters, such as Jan Miel, left evidence of the popularity of blue cottons in Flanders, and it was also widely used in Spain. For example in *The Recapture of Bahia* by Juan Bautista Maino (1635, Madrid, Prado Museum; inv. P00885) we see a particularly bright blue on some of the male figures (cloaks, jackets, shirts, gaiters), on the women (a skirt) and on the children (breeches); in the *View of Saragossa* by Juan Bautista Martinez del Mazo (Madrid, Prado Museum, inv. 889), dated 1646-1647 there are both male and female figures dressed in bright blue.

Blue clothing is also a recurring element in Italian *vedute* and genre scene paintings of all the schools: from the Neapolitan – works by Domenico Gargiulo called Micco Spadaro and by Filippo Napoletano, to the Piedmontese which, for this study is best expressed by the works of Pieter Borgomans, better known as Bolkman (Utrecht 1640 – Turin 1710), to the Lombard. We must also bear in mind that these painters often worked in places other than where they lived, for example there are Bolkman's landscapes of Genoa and he also worked in Rome, and Filippo Napoletano spent long periods in Rome and in Tuscany. This quick overview clearly shows a significant – if not prevalent – use of fabrics ranging from deep to light blue in all regions of Italy and throughout Europe in general.

The fashion for new and intense shades of blue in late seventeenth century textiles and clothing was due mainly to the use of indigo dye instead of woad. From the beginning through to the end of the sixteenth century woad (*pastel* in French) was one of the most common dyes used to make blue. It was extracted from *isatis plants* that were imported from Africa during the twelfth century and then cultivated also in Italy. After very lengthy processing, the leaves were pressed into loaves called *coques* or *coquaine* in French, *cuccagna* in Italian from the moulds that were used for the purpose – and this gave rise to various expressions such as *paese della cuccagna* meaning Cockaigne, Land of Plenty – a rich village in other words.

In addition to woad, the best known blue dye was certainly indigo. Documented in Genoa since 1140, indigo had also been prized for its medicinal qualities – as an effective anti-inflammatory – ever since Ancient Roman times (Pliny the Elder). Starting from the second half of the sixteenth century and notwithstanding the opposition of those who produced woad dye, indigo spread throughout Europe thanks to the intensified trade with the Middle and Far East and mainly the new colonial frontiers that were a source of a type of indigo plants that made it possible to obtain dyes that were superior to those obtained from the Asian species.<sup>21</sup> Spain and Italy were the first two countries to accept the new product which became a source of considerable profits while Germany and France, where woad production was concentrated, tried – in vain – to combat the innovation.

17. *Ibid.*, p. 18.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 19 cited in Gorguet-Ballestreros, 1994, p. 28.

19. Respectively 11, 12 and 15 *denari* per yard, which is a useful basis for comparison if we consider that the same quantity of black silk velvet cost 23 *soldi* during the same period, cf. S. Levey, 1998, p. 30.

20. Fennell Mazzaoui, 1981, p. 89 and Lemire, 1991, pp. 89 ff.

21. Pastoureau, 2008, pp. 150-158;



Fig. 1 – Jan Brueghel the Elder and Joos de Momper the Younger, *Market Scene with Washerwomen*, Madrid, Museo del Prado.

Indigo, which made it possible to dye cotton without mordants, came in valuable loaves that were pressed so tightly that they seemed like stone. Contact with the oxygen in air was sufficient to fix the colour and obtain a wide variety of stable, deep blues that were lightfast and could withstand laundering.

Thanks to its flourishing port and the entrepreneurial skills of its merchant class Genoa was a crossroads and this made it even easier to obtain raw materials.

Unfortunately, the lack of in-depth research on the clothing of the lower classes makes it difficult, if not impossible to quantify the popularity of cotton fabrics. However, comparisons with the customs of other countries<sup>22</sup> allow us to assume that they were widely used in both men's and women's clothing. Since cotton stuffs were very common, it is clear that not a scrap has survived: it was customary – even for very expensive silk garments embroidered with golden threads – to use clothes until they were completely worn out. Luckily, some items did escape this inexorable fate and in Genoa there is invaluable evidence of blue cotton or linen items of clothing.

22. Lemire, 1991; Ewing, 1984; the studies by Roche, 1989 and Perrot, 1995 on France.

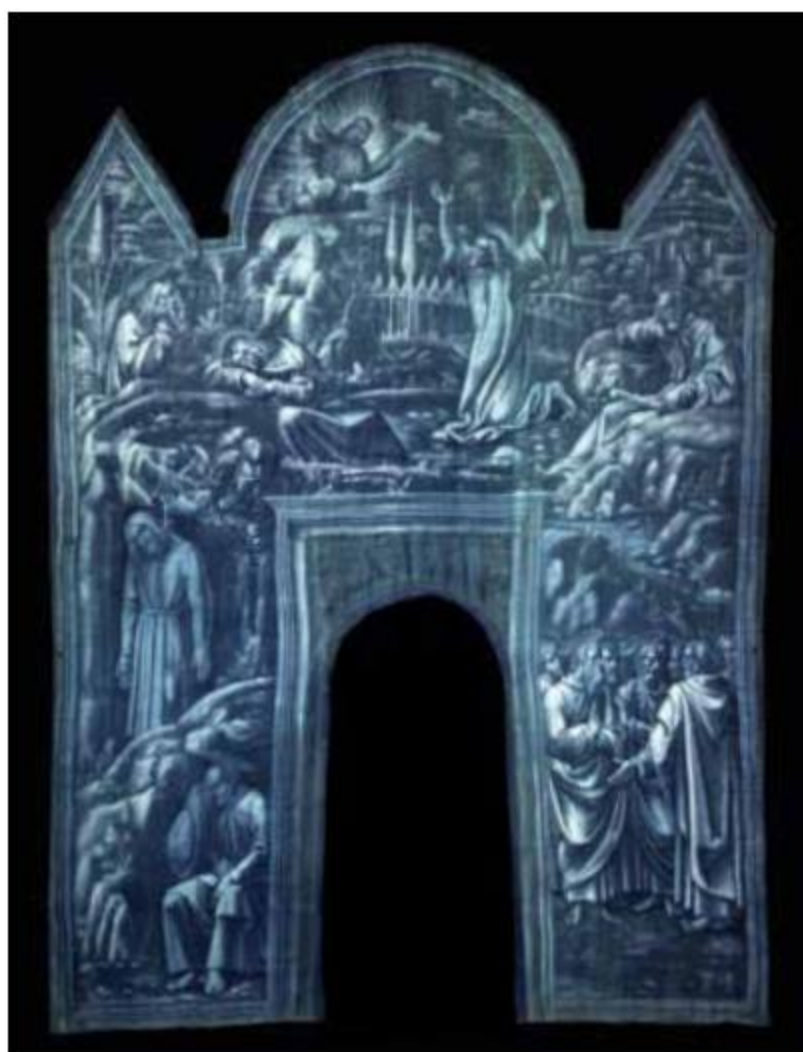
The most extraordinary example is the series of fourteen canvases with *Scenes of the Passion* painted in 1540 by Teramo Piaggio (Zoagli, 1485-1554) and other Ligurian-Lombard artists for Lenten devotions. These canvases from the Abbazia di S. Nicolò del Boschetto in Genoa, where they were conserved up to the nineteenth century, came into private ownership and were saved from scattering thanks to the intervention of the Soprintendenza of Genoa which, in 2000, sponsored the purchase by the Ministero per i Beni e le Attività Culturali and made it possible to display them in the rooms of the Museo Diocesano in Genoa<sup>23</sup> (fig. 2).

Some of the figurines in eighteenth century Nativity Scenes conserved in the Museo Luxoro in Genoa and dressed in their original clothes are unwitting and extremely rare specimens of Genoese fustian, the ancestors of jeans. In fact, even though no specific tests have been done, a visual inspection reveals that all the blue clothes are made of a fabric with a diagonal weave with an ecru colour linen (or hemp?) warp and blue weft, which makes them blue fustian and therefore jeans! (fig. 3 and 4).

Our painter shows a special predilection for fabrics, which seem to be bright blue cotton. He used them to

23. Cataldi Gallo, 2007b; *id.*, 2008, pp. 75-87.

Fig. 2 – Teramo Piaggio and assistants, *The Garden of Gethsemane, Judas Hanging Himself and the Repentance of Peter, and Christ and the Apostles*, 1538-1540, Genoa, textile collection of the Soprintendenza per i Beni Storici Artistici ed Etnoantropologici della Liguria, on loan to the Museo Diocesano.



“make” the women’s aprons in the two versions of the *Woman Sewing* (cat. 7 and 8), in the *Woman Begging with Two Children* (cat. 9) and the two versions of the *Frugal Meal* (cat. 5 and 6). In the men’s clothing the gaiters of the man being shaved are widened by a coarse triangular insert and are a striking element in the very dark interior which is developed in the relationships of various shades of brown and white. Even the breeches of the boy at the foot of the bed in the two versions of the *Woman Sewing* – and the torn blue cloth on the pillow – speak to the artist’s passion for blue cloth and in all likelihood spring from his keen observations of everyday life.

The figures and settings in the *corpus* of paintings attributed to his hand evoke poverty, an extreme poverty, which, as we look closely, reveals something more: we can describe it as the art of making do in order to survive – an art practised by the poorest of the poor. We see patched cloaks – worn by the old man feeding the child in the Ghent painting (cat. 6), or the man in the *Barber’s Shop* (cat. 12), we see an already worn-out piece of cloth being mended by a woman wearing a torn white head veil and a ripped apron (cat. 7 and 8).

But the most unique elements of his statements are the figures dressed in clothes that are inconsistent with their age and status. These examples of distance from what we could define as the “norm” are particularly evident in the clothing of the children and the female beggar (cat. 9). In all the examples, albeit with the obvious differences between the men’s and women’s clothing, the oddity is that figures are portrayed with clothes that are clearly not their own. The young woman, that is the two versions of the “mother sewing” and the “beggar” are wearing the same jacket with the

long peplum that we see clearly in the Canesso painting; the sleeves with the longitudinal slash are in fashion with the times, but torn and worn from prolonged use, with an orange-yellow doublet underneath. In the version with the beggar standing (cat. 9), we see the leather or gilded braid along the cuff and around the buttons on the doublet under the jacket: it may have belonged to a man, perhaps a soldier.

We can ask the same questions about the provenance of the clothes as we look at the jackets of the children, especially the one with a piece of pie (cat. 4), and the one asking for alms with his mother and sister (cat. 9), both are decidedly oversized. The boy wearing clothes that are too big for him seems like a *topos* and we see this in paintings by Ceruti and Olivero – and yet his garments have fine details such as the buttonholes along the edges of the high collar that are in striking contrast with the marked allusion to poverty.

In this case too, the provenance of the clothes is very uncertain and leads us to believe that the artist ventured into the farthest corners of the world of the poor and that he also wanted to portray the borderline aspects with respect to concepts of “good manners” and respect for private property. Their provenance may be traced – and I believe with little conviction – to clothes handed down from one family member to another, or to use items received as gifts from some benefactor or the parish<sup>24</sup>, although it is more plausible to consider the used clothing market, or theft as their source.

It is as if our artist’s paintings take us into a little-known working class world, where the art of getting by and criminal behaviours went hand-in-hand. As already

24. Styles, 2007, p. 307.



noted by Gerlinde Gruber<sup>25</sup> his paintings seem to easily break down into two groups: the “proper” poor, who even in their misfortune try to salvage appearances as best they can such as in the painting of the old man feeding a well-dressed boy in front of the grandmother who is wearing a perfectly ironed collar, and in the various versions of the “frugal meal” (cat. 5, 6 and 10), and those of the poor who have been thrust to the limits of respectability with clothes that are too big, with rips and tears that seem deliberately accentuated.

Recent studies on the clothing of the lower classes have revealed the special role of clothing in seventeenth-eighteenth century society. In trade, even if their economic value was minimal, clothing always played a special role because of the intimate relationship with the body; clothes served the purpose of protecting and covering it, as well as of revealing and showing it. Therefore, their role is not only related to comfort and hygiene, but also a desire for identity, respectability and property.

Clothes differed from other items owned by a family because they belonged to the individual members: they were personal. For young adults, in particular, clothes were very special – they were the only things they owned and because they were free to make choices and decisions about them – they could use their savings to buy a garment or accessories, and some of the latter such as ribbons or handkerchiefs were truly inexpensive<sup>26</sup>. On the other hand, some of the recurring accessories we see in the paintings, specifically the knotted kerchiefs on all the women’s heads

25. Gruber, 2006, pp.159-170.

26. Styles, 2007, p. 303.



Fig. 3 – Ligurian sculptor of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, *Shepherd*, Genoa-Nervi, Museo Luxoro.

Fig. 4 – Ligurian sculptor of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, *Shepherd* (detail of the “casacca”), Genoa-Nervi, Museo Luxoro.

and the aprons – as well as essential items of apparel, were considered “assets”, even among all social classes and could be pawned when the family needed money.<sup>27</sup> Therefore, it should come as no surprise that many men and women of the less affluent classes felt a strong desire to own at least one fashionable garment or one that approximately resembled what was in vogue among the elites. Generally, in the working class clothing we can see, a certain familiarity with “the broad trends of high fashion”<sup>28</sup>, although it is obviously not the latest style.

The special consideration that the poor had for clothes meant that wearing garments which were clearly not their own was a strong way of revealing a level of poverty that, perhaps more than prompting them to buy second hand things, led them to steal. Furthermore, in late Baroque folk literature, in moralizing treatises and in Parisian police reports there is a tendency to overlap these two approaches to dressing – second-hand purchases and theft – and both were viewed as closely tied to the base instincts of the lower classes.<sup>29</sup>

Clothing thefts were very common, partly because everyone needed clothes – as cover/protection or to satisfy vanity – and also because since they had but little furniture, the poor generally had more than one of each item of apparel. They almost always had a costume for every day and another for special occasions.<sup>30</sup> Stealing linens – that was simple when they were drying outdoors – and clothing was

27. Welch, 2005, p. 28.

28. Styles 2007, p. 304.

29. Roche, 1989, pp. 313 ff.

30. Styles, 2007, p. 305.

a significant crime in late seventeenth century Paris, in fact, it was on the list of crimes punishable by royal justice when controls became more stringent starting in 1670.<sup>31</sup>

In conclusion, as we have seen, the widespread use of cotton textiles and especially of blue cottons is not particularly helpful in determining where the Master worked. A review of the clothing – given the lack of documents concerning the apparel of the lower classes – reveals some recurring features: first the fact that early seventeenth or even sixteenth century styles persisted. This was pointed out by Gerlinde Gruber<sup>32</sup> with reference to the *Mother Sewing*: the white kerchief, knotted and plumped up on the nape of the neck, was widespread in the Venetian area and we see it often in Bassano's paintings. She has also proposed a dating around 1620-1640 for the footwear. The white cap worn by the old man feeding the child in the frugal dinners has famous precedents in Caravaggio's paintings such as the *Supper at Emmaus* (London, National Gallery; Milan, Pinacoteca di Brera). The persistent use of some garments reflects the need to wear them as long as possible on the one hand, and on the other it shows how strongly traditions were rooted: examples are the white cap and bodice worn by the old woman in the *Frugal Supper* and the little beggar girl (are there traces of dwarfism in this figure?). In addition to the white cap, the other head coverings seem to echo the language of late seventeenth century genre scene painters, such as the floppy hat with the wide, rounded

brim that practically hides the face in the *Boy with a Piece of Pie*. However, the leading role certainly goes to the kerchief tied under the chin worn by nearly all the females in our Master's paintings. The kerchief, that also had a monetary value since it could be pawned, is also significant in the work of Monsù Bernardo and Giacomo Ceruti.

Probably these notes on the history of costume are not sufficient for tracing the artist's career to a specific geographic area – perhaps between Lombardy and the Veneto region – but they can complement the studies focused on his artistic output.

The fact that he is called the Master of the Blue Jeans – is technically justified by the fact that he paints cotton cloths, presumably fustian which, the English christened as “jeans” in the late sixteenth century simply because it was imported from Genoa. The Master's appellative is also more of a reflection of the current popularity of the pants “born” in the United States around 1860 than the historic origins of this humble and sturdy cloth that has been enchanting consumers from the Middle Ages to the present. In essence, it is precisely this bond with our lives today that draws us closer to this keen spirited and sensitive “maestro” whose portrayals offer us a revealing glimpse of the human condition of his subjects.

My heartfelt thanks to Grazietta Butazzi, an outstanding reference for scholars of the history of costume, for her advice and suggestions.

---

31. Roche, 1989, p. 317.

32. Gruber, 2006, p. 165.

# Catalogue

VÉRONIQUE DAMIAN  
GERLINDE GRUBER

1. *Old Man Holding a Wine Flask, with a Young Boy*

OIL ON CANVAS, 19 1/8 × 14 15/16 IN (48.6 × 37.9 CM)

ROME, GALLERIA DELL'ACCADEMIA NAZIONALE DI SAN LUCA, INV. 172

LITERATURE

Kultzen, 1996, p. 92, no. 17, fig. 17 (with earlier literature); Laureati, in exh. cat., Brescia, 1998-1999, illus. p. 151, 334, no. 29; Jansen – Sutton, in exh. cat., Amsterdam – San Francisco – Hartford, 2002, p. 152-153, under no. xxvi, note 1.

EXHIBITED

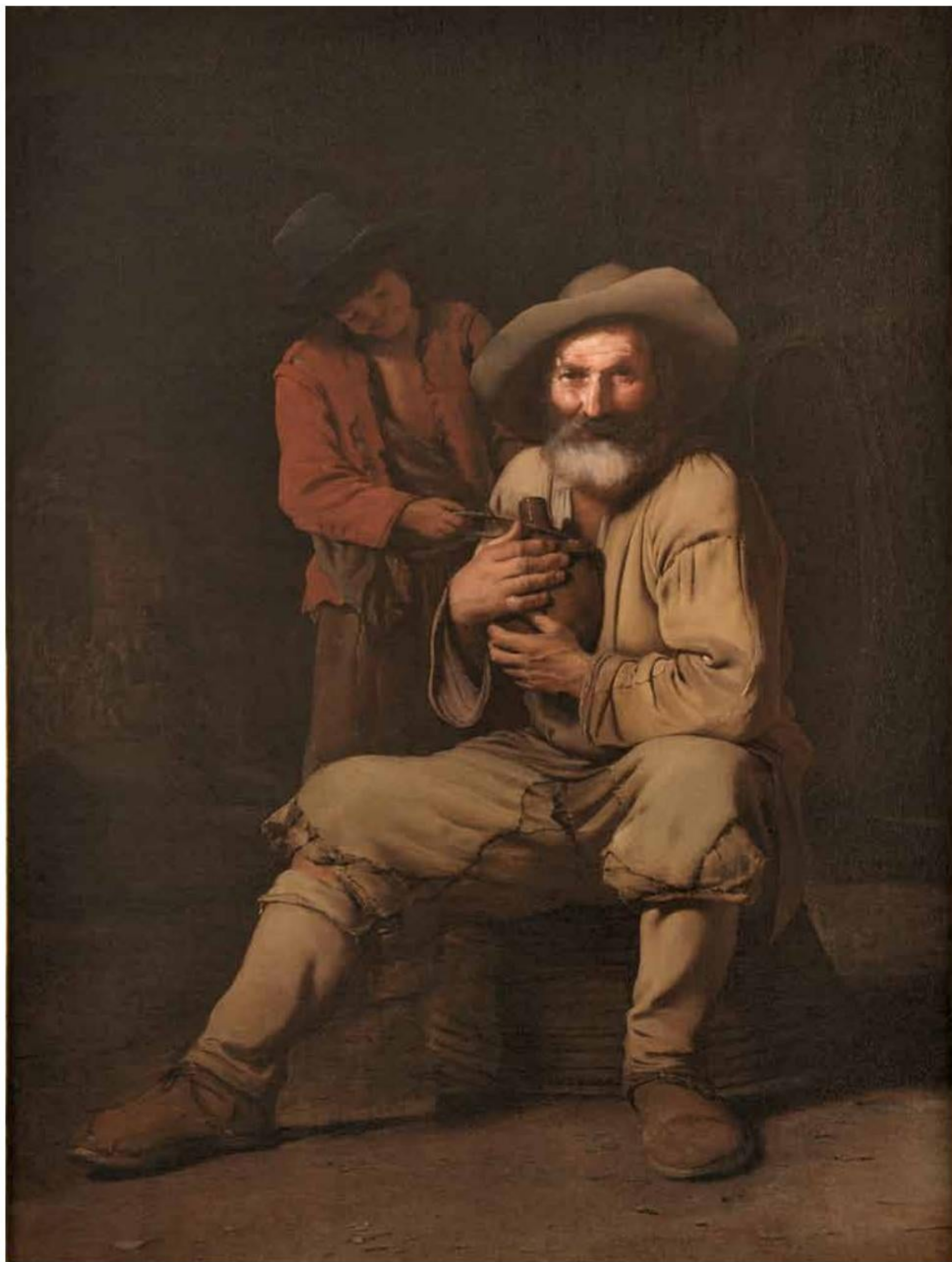
Brescia, 1998-1999, illus. p. 151, 334, no. 29.

It is hardly fortuitous that Michael Sweerts' style in his initial Roman period – he is recorded in the Eternal City in 1646, aged twenty-eight – can at once be linked to the *Bamboccianti*, a group of painters of Flemish origin whose special focus was on scenes drawn from popular life, with small, very defined figures. Pieter van Laer (1599 – c. 1642), the pioneer of this sort of genre painting, had already died when Sweerts arrived, and even if artists were still treating such subjects, they approached them in a more structured manner. Our Flemish painter (since it has now been established that Sweerts was born in Brussels in 1618) paid close attention to the world of common people, varying his subjects and moving with ease from outdoor to indoor scenes, painting peasants or city dwellers, individual studies *dal vero* or portraits, sometimes with an allegorical content.

Laura Laureati (1998-1999, p. 334) states entirely appropriately that as regards composition, Sweerts' small-scale scenes are still inspired by (and seem "Roman" echoes of) Flemish popular subjects created in this period in Antwerp and Brussels by David Teniers the Younger (1610-1690). Here, the old man who seems under the influence of alcohol is seated in a place that is hard to describe: is he in the yard of an inn, or in a storage shed of that inn, as the barrel to his right might suggest? Set in a secondary area, some swiftly-sketched figures can be perceived through an open door, in an interior. This allows the painter to open up the picture space, slightly attenuating the frontal quality of the scene, though that is what gives the depiction its most modern aspect. As would happen later with our Master of the Blue Jeans, the focus is on the figures much more than on their setting, which is scarcely defined. As in the painting by Cipper (cat. 13), it is the dialogue between the figures that captures the attention of viewers seeking to guess its message. There seems to be tension between the two main

figures, as the old man, visibly tipsy from the wine he has drunk from his flask, is undecided about giving it up to the young boy who is carefully trying to remove it from him. As scholars have emphasised, the scene could have a moral undertone: the danger of abusing alcohol, and on a broader level, a warning against vice in general. The shiny-eyed old man resists the message brought by the boy, refusing to be made into an example. The picture as a whole is created with varying brown tonalities, with the exception of the boy, who wears a tattered brick red coat. Our painter treated this subject several times during his career. The theme of a man – young or old, holding a bottle, seated in an interior or outside, alone or with another principal figure – is described in different ways. He appears young and joyful in a painting in a European private collection (Kultzen, 1996, p. 90, no. 10), painted shortly after his arrival in Rome, or some years older, once again holding a jug, as in the later painting in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (Kultzen, 1996, p. 112, no. 79). Rolf Kultzen places this work within the painter's Roman period, between 1650 and 1655. The painting's provenance is from the private collection of Maurizio Dumarest in Rome, and was part of a larger bequest by him to the Accademia Nazionale di San Luca. Another version (48.6 × 39.3 cm) attributed to Sweerts and considered to be a copy by Rolf Kultzen (1996, p. 92, under no. 17) is now in the Agnes Etherington Art Centre, Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario (gift of Alfred and Isabel Bader, Milwaukee; see Zafran, in exh. cat., Amsterdam – San Francisco – Hartford, 2002, p. 61, fig. 57). Kultzen refers to another copy auctioned in New York (Christie's, 10 June 1983, lot 134), and also suggests that the present canvas may have been the pendant of the *Man Reading while Leaning on a Skull* (Florence, Fondazione Roberto Longhi; Kultzen, 1996, p. 94, no. 23).

VÉRONIQUE DAMIAN



## 2. *A Boy Warming himself, with his Dog*

OIL ON CANVAS, 28 3/4 × 38 3/16 IN (73 × 97 CM)

VIENNA, GEMÄLDEGALERIE DER AKADEMIE DER BILDENDEN KÜNSTE, INV. 261

### LITERATURE

Schwemmlinger, 1873, p. 3, no 53 (after Murillo); Lützow, 1889, p. 263 (Spanish School, 17<sup>th</sup> century); Lützow, 1900, p. 273 (Spanish School, 17<sup>th</sup> century); Frimmel, 1901, p. 122 (minor painter); Voss, 1925, p. 637 (Amorosi); Eigenberger, 1927, p. 4 (Amorosi); Heimbürger, 1988, p. 189 (Keilhau); Trnek, 1989, p. 126 (Keilhau); Trnek, 1997, p. 182 (Keilhau).

### EXHIBITED

Vienna, Akademie, 1969, p. 19.

This painting is in satisfactory condition. In 1822 it was offered to the Picture Gallery of the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna by Count Lamberg-Sprinzenstein. It shows a boy sprawled on the ground, dressed in simple clothes. Resting his left arm on a chair and supporting his chin with his left hand, he stares at the viewer pensively. His right arm is stretched over a brazier full of embers so he can warm himself. A red fur cap lies across the chair, and a dog sits near the boy, its attention drawn by the embers. Where this takes place remains unspecified, since the wall providing the sole setting could belong as easily to an interior as to an outdoor scene. The Viennese collection owns a second painting by Keilhau that forms a pendant to this one, with *Two Children Weaving a Garland of Flowers*. Like many other works from this realistic genre, the picture was initially regarded as Spanish, by an artist inspired by Murillo. Taking up an attribution expressed orally by Roberto Longhi, Hermann Voss published it in 1925 as by Antonio Amorosi. Finally, Minna Heimbürger recognised the style of Monsù Bernardo during his

period in Bergamo (circa 1655). According to the Danish scholar, several allegorical interpretations are possible: the brazier represents winter or fire; the hand of the boy who approaches it to warm himself, touch; and the dog stands for smell. We would opt for a more straightforward idea: that the artist's principal aim was the depiction of the youth, and that the dog beside him could indicate he was a shepherd. No other seventeenth-century painter adopted the subject of children so frequently, and as such he became a significant source of inspiration for Evaristo Baschenis and the Master of the Blue Jeans. This painting may be dated to the years 1650/1660. The boy has the same serious features as those found in our Master, but Monsù Bernardo's style is softer and his touch lighter, with a more expressive description of his characters' flesh tones. Combined with warm, gentle lighting, this style yields a generally calmer atmosphere. By comparison, the reality we find in the Master of the Blue Jeans is harsher and drier, and his marked use of chiaroscuro connects him more with the tradition of Caravaggio.

GERLINDE GRUBER



### 3. *Young Boy with a Basket of Bread and Pastries*

OIL ON CANVAS, 21 1/4 × 28 3/4 IN (54 × 73 CM)

MILAN, MARIO SCAGLIA COLLECTION

#### LITERATURE

Biancale, 1912, p. 325, 334, note 1; Delogu, 1931, p. 220; Angelini, 1943, p. 87, no. 20; Longhi, in exh. cat., Milan, 1953, pp. x, 41, 43, no. 54; Cipriani and Testori, in exh. cat., Milan, 1953, p. 43, no. 54; Griseri, 1953, p. 63; Pignatti, 1953, p. 277; Testori, 1953, p. 24; Delogu, 1962, p. 164; Volpe, in exh. cat., Naples – Zurich – Rotterdam, 1964-1965, p. 91, no. 206, fig. 92b; Gregori, 1969, p. 108; Rosci, 1971, pp. 50-51, 58, note 70; Valsecchi, 1972, nos. VIII, XXXII; Bergström, 1975, p. 288; Gregori, 1982, p. 31, 92, note 161; Frangi, 1991, pp. 42, 276; Bentivoglio Ravasio, 1993, p. 345; De Pascale, in exh. cat., Bergamo, 1996-1997, pp. 166-169, no. 16; Rosci, in exh. cat., Bergamo, 1996-1997, pp. 45-46, 50, note 21; Ruggeri, 1996, p. 321; Bayer, in exh. cat., New York, 2000, pp. 92-95; Frangi, in exh. cat., Milan, 2002, pp. 208-209, no. 82; De Pascale, in exh. cat., New York, 2004, pp. 214-215; Gruber, 2006, p. 161; Morandotti, in exh. cat., Milan, 2007-2008, pp. 210-213.

#### EXHIBITED

Rome, 1945, no. 118; Milan, 1953, pp. x, 41, 43, no. 54; Naples – Zurich – Rotterdam, 1964-1965, p. 91, no. 206, fig. 92b; Bergamo, 1996-1997, pp. 166-169, no. 16; Milan, 2002, p. 208, no. 82; Milan, 2007-2008, pp. 210-213.

This painting must have seen the light of day in Bergamo, and its presence there is securely proved during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (it was with the Quarenghi family prior to 1912). Thereafter, in both Bergamo and Rome, it became the property of Gianforte Suardi and passed by descent to Count Guido Suardi, who lent it to the great Italian still life exhibition of 1964; it then passed through the Milanese art market, where it was acquired in 1984 by the present owner.

Our familiarity with his numerous still life paintings, exemplary for their fidelity to truth, and especially his celebrated images of musical instruments, makes us forget that the Bergamasque artist Evaristo Baschenis was also a figure painter (Tassi, 1793, I, p. 235). As regards the pictures that have come down to us, we must admit that the figures always yield to marvellous passages of still life painting, as in the famous *Agliardi Triptych* (private collection), a representation of members of the Agliardi family as musicians: the latter are the true actors in this scene, yet the compositions always perfectly illustrate that for Baschenis genre painting was “portrait painting”. Here, the portrait of the young boy has been deliberately set on the right so as to place the basket centrally, a rare moment of equilibrium in this virtuoso exercise whose aim was to bring together a figure and a still life. The two motifs are completely united, in a crisp rendering that burgeons with details: the white frosting of the pastries appears in easy rivalry with the snowflake-like pompoms of the shirt tassels, each treated with scrupulously attentive brushwork. Then comes tonal harmony, with bronzed browns and greys, so brilliantly offset by the red of the upturned sleeve and the details of the trimming and buttons. Finally, direct light describes the child’s refined, serious facial features, while greater contrasts are used for the basket, where the shadows cast by the pastries enliven its outer edge – a favoured and frequent motif of this artist, especially in his *Kitchen Still Lifes* (private collections; Milan, Brera Gallery; see exh. cat., Bergamo, 1996-1997, nos. 9, 10, 41). Through the portrait, this still life

comes alive, offering a mirror of its period and society. In the context of our exhibition, this painting stands as a Lombard precedent to the kind of genre scene that was treated as a slice of life, and aside from its intellectual ambition, the *Young Boy with a Basket of Bread and Pastries* takes on a particular flavour. Indeed we cannot help but compare it – invited as we are by their shared subject-matter, a portrait of a young boy – with the *Beggar Boy with a Piece of Pie* (cat. 4). It appears as a sort of elegant, refined counterpart, with nothing to be jealous about as regards psychological intensity. While Baschenis’ boy is stylishly dressed, exhibiting his enticing trophy industriously and without fanfare, the other stands with holes in his clothing, enduring hunger and cold. The painter’s focus is on his hands – reddened, or hidden away in his coat in search of a bit of warmth, his face half-hidden by the decidedly oversize collar, with the numbed expression of someone standing in the cold awaiting any opportunity for survival – a quality obviously absent in Baschenis’ composition. There, we see the triumph of delectation, mediated by the still life of a basket loaded with biscuits known as Savoyards, bread and *ciambelle* (small rings); the precariously-balanced Savoyard conveys the boy’s effort to keep everything balanced. The predominant place given to these delicacies enables the artist to invent a sort of painting that speaks directly to the senses. Baschenis leaves an original mark on the road that leads from Caravaggio to Vermeer – as regards the latter, adopting a smooth, delicate technique for the description of the face. This is a quality he shared with the young boy painted by the Master of the Blue Jeans (cat. 4), perhaps prompted by the presence in Northern Italy of Northern European artists of Michael Sweerts’ calibre. For a detailed discussion of the painting and its literature, the reader is referred to the most recent study by Alessandro Morandotti, who believes the work was painted in about 1650/1660, a fairly late dating in Baschenis’ oeuvre, here defined by a true masterpiece.

VÉRONIQUE DAMIAN



4. *A Beggar Boy with a Piece of Pie*

OIL ON CANVAS, 33 7/8 × 27 15/16 IN (86 × 71 CM)

PARIS, CANESSO GALLERY

LITERATURE

Gruber, in exh. cat., Milan, 1998-1999, p. 425 under no. 90; Gruber, in Frangi and Morandotti, 2004, pp. 156, 158, 160 (illus.); Gruber, in exh. cat., Milan, 2006, pp. 128-130; Gruber, 2006, pp. 160-161, 165, fig. 242.

The painting comes from an Italian private collection and represents a young boy in front of a column, dressed in a torn jacket and holding a piece of pie in his left hand. He has put his right hand into his jacket, covering his left shoulder, and with a half-open mouth he addresses the viewer with a gaze at once insistent and serious. While the flesh tones are rendered precisely, with a particularly smooth picture surface, the child's clothing and its accessories are handled with swift brushstrokes. The clean, meticulously painted face, matches his thin, delicate fingers. These two details could contradict his popular social origins.

In his photographic library, Roberto Longhi classified the image of the *Beggar Boy with a Piece of Pie* as Michael Sweerts (Brussels, 1618 – Goa, 1664), no doubt because the long, serious face and melancholic expression reminded him of the *Boy with a Hat* by this artist in the Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford, a painting of about 1655-1656. Apart from these points of resemblance, the boy painted by the Master of the Blue Jeans appears less lyrical. In Sweerts, the refinement of execution in the facial features was prompted by idealisation, something not intended by our artist. Here what dominates is a realistic vision, and it enhances the expressive power of the painting. Moreover, our anonymous master uses a more marked contrast of light and shade than Sweerts. The serious expression of the face recalls a painting by Evaristo Baschenis (see

cat. 3) that holds a special place in his oeuvre (Frangi, 2002, p. 208). Both succeed – through an insistent facial expression and a simplified composition – in lending a poetic tone to their work. Baschenis' background is dark and unified, while the Master of the Blue Jeans depicts part of a column. Both artists share a Caravaggesque manner of composition, in which a single light source comes from the upper left. The Master of the Blue Jeans' memories of Caravaggio are even more precise, with contrasts of light and shade on the boy's face described in a much more decisive way than Baschenis; and the background column offers a distant echo of the niche and framing behind the Virgin in Caravaggio's *Madonna of the Pilgrims* (Rome, Sant'Agostino, Cavalletti Chapel). The flesh colour of the little beggar, described with special care, stands out among the works attributed to the Master of the Blue Jeans. Hypothetically, we can place this painting at the beginning of our artist's career, which concluded, we imagine, with *The Barber's Shop* (cat. 12; see the essay by G. Gruber in this catalogue), a work defined in certain parts by a swift, even abbreviated, painterly handling. Indeed, such a pictorial concept occurs more frequently in Italy – one can think of Antonio Cifrondi here – and this could indicate that our little boy was painted before *The Barber's Shop*, in a period of the artist's development less marked by Italian influences.

GERLINDE GRUBER



5. *A Frugal Meal*

OIL ON CANVAS, 36 1/4 × 44 1/2 IN (92 × 113 CM)

PARIS, CANESSO GALLERY

6. *A Frugal Meal* (NOT EXHIBITED)

OIL ON CANVAS, 58 1/2 × 46 3/4 IN (148.7 × 118.8 CM)

GAND, MUSEUM VOOR SCHONE KUNSTEN, INV. NO. 1905 - A

LITERATURE NO. 5

Eeckhout, 1960, p. 377, II, fig. 167a;  
Gruber, 2006, p. 162.

LITERATURE NO. 6

Ghent cat., 1909, pp. 88-89  
(as Spanish, c. 1615-1630, School  
of Seville); Frimmel, 1913; Ghent  
cat., 1938, p. 153 (as Neapolitan,  
17<sup>th</sup> century); Bautier, 1943, p. 13,  
fig. XIV; Chabot, in exh. cat.,  
Brussels - Liège - Luxembourg,  
1949, p. 18, no. 29 (as Italian, 17<sup>th</sup>  
century); Chabot, 1951, p. 26,  
no. 32 (attributed to Ceruti);  
Eeckhout, 1960, pp. 373-377  
(Lombard, late 17<sup>th</sup> century);  
Moulin, 1988, p. 168; Hoozee,  
1988, p. 41; Hoozee and Tahon-  
Vanroose, 1989, p. 64; Cappelletti,  
in exh. cat., Brescia, 1998-1999,  
p. 305, note 67; Hoozee, 2000,  
p. 34 (Northern Italian); Gruber,  
2006, pp. 162-163, fig. 247.

The provenance of the painting in the Canesso Gallery, acquired in 2009, is – like its pendant (cat. 11) – the collection of Ignazio Ramone of Imperia, in Liguria; the pair had been purchased in 1947 from the Anselmi collection in Porto Maurizio (near Imperia), where they were considered to be “Flemish”. The canvas is in good condition. The *Frugal Meal* in Ghent was acquired in 1905 by the Museum voor Schone Kunsten from the Viennese collection of Ladislaus Bloch (see Frimmel, 1913, as “anonymous Spanish”). Later, it was believed to have been a creation of the Neapolitan school, and then in 1951 Chabot attributed it to Ceruti, followed by Eeckhout (1960), who related it to the Lombard style of the late seventeenth century. More recently, the canvas was associated with Northern Italian painting (Hoozee, 2000). Both pictures clearly represent the same scene, the first with half-length figures in a horizontal format, the second in a vertical arrangement with full-length figures. Apart from a variation in the placement of a tear in the tablecloth in the foreground, and – in the Paris canvas – a group of unidentified small metal pieces (coins?) lying next to the plate of small birds, the two paintings show only minimal differences in style. An older couple and a young boy are seated at a narrow table laid with a dish of rice soup, a plate of small birds, a piece of bread, a spoon and a knife. The old woman looks beyond the picture space, holding the plate of birds in one hand and eating a pie of Lombard greens, probably beets mixed with other vegetables. The old man offers the child a spoonful of rice soup as the latter blows on it to cool it down. The food depicted here is typical of a simple meal in the North of Italy or Lombardy. Brass spoons like these were produced in Italy during the seventeenth century, and first appear round 1600 (information given by Alexandra van Dongen, 20 June 2010: see Klijn, 1987, p. 17). Once again we can see how carefully the Master of the Blue Jeans studied reality. The old man’s cloak is patched up, yet his collar and bonnet, made of white fabric, are clean and free of mending, like those of the boy. These people belong to the low end of the middle class, and could be poor artisans. The collars of the man and boy are more decorative than sculpted, and are stylistically comparable to the apron in the *Woman sewing with Two Children* (cat. 7 and 8). In the painting in Paris, the

remarkably precise description of the old woman’s eye, with the eyeball revealing its slight humidity, bears witness to a feeling for anatomical detail that could indicate a Northern origin for our painter. This detail leads us to believe that the Canesso Gallery canvas may predate the one in Ghent, and that it would thus be close in time to the *Young Beggar Boy with a Piece of Pie* (cat. 4), where the face is painted in an even more delicate manner. These two paintings share a proximity to Caravaggesque compositions, which would further support our suggested chronology. The figures in the Paris painting, set in a neutral environment, lacking any indication of space and plunged into darkness, take their place within a tradition that dates back to the beginning of the seventeenth century, that of Caravaggio, and even more of Bartolomeo Manfredi, who led the path to this new, more realist direction (Hartje, 2004, pp. 128-135, 211-255). The *Bodegones* by Velázquez have been mentioned several times with respect to our group of paintings (see the essay by Frangi and Morandotti in this catalogue), but the Master of the Blue Jeans goes further in his focus on meals. At the beginning of the seventeenth century, scenes set around a table were usually associated with love, games (cards or chess) and music, and these straightforward subjects could sometimes make covert reference to fraud and cheating, and thus an allegorical or moral connotation – which could come from Biblical stories such as the Prodigal Son, Lazarus and Dives, or the Calling of Matthew. This was not the case with the Master of the Blue Jeans, who painted anonymous figures, of low social standing, in the act of eating. The Ghent version is expanded, so to speak, and we cannot tell the contents of the bottle in the immediate foreground – oil or some sort of drink? In his scenes composed around a table, Giacomo Francesco Cipper, known as Todeschini, depicted earthenware jugs of wine, carafes of water, glasses and goblets. In a painting of the Prodigal Son with prostitutes, there is a bottle resembling the one in the *Frugal Meal* in Ghent, with a similar stopper (Proni, 1994, no. 42). Red wine is clearly recognisable in one of the two glasses in Todeschini’s picture, which could suggest that the bottle depicted in Ghent could also be full of wine.

GERLINDE GRUBER







7. ***Woman Sewing with Two Children***

OIL ON CANVAS, 40 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>16</sub> × 76 IN (102 × 193 CM)

MILAN, FONDAZIONE CARIPLO, INV. NO. AFO1257AFC

8. ***Woman Sewing with Two Children***

OIL ON CANVAS, 39 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub> × 71 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> IN (100 × 181 CM)

PARIS, CANESSO GALLERY

LITERATURE NO. 7

Spiriti, 1998, p. 75; Colace, in Gatti-Perer, 1998, pp. 226-229, no. 107; Rossi, 1998, p. 38; Frangi, 2000, II, p. 1145-1162; Gruber, in Frangi and Morandotti, 2004, p. 158, illus.; Gruber, in exh. cat., Milan, 2006, p. 130, illus.; Gruber, 2006, pp. 161-162, 165, 167.

LITERATURE NO. 8

Gruber, in exh. cat., Milan, 2006, pp. 128-130; Gruber, 2006, pp. 161, 164-165, fig. 243.

The Milanese painting was formerly (like cat. nos. 5 and 11) in a Ligurian private collection, namely that of the art historian Caterina Marcenaro in Genoa (see Rossi, 1998, p. 38), who bequeathed it to the Cariplo bank in Milan. In the Marcenaro collection, this was believed to be a work by the Dutch painter Johannes Vermeer (1632-1675) – surprisingly, from a current point of view – perhaps because of the calm mood that emanates from this scene of daily life, although Vermeer (unlike our painter) was known for his bourgeois interiors. But the canvas, with its monumental description of a rural milieu, bears witness to quite another culture, reflected in its initial attribution to the French School of the first half of the seventeenth century (Colace, 1998, citing Federico Zeri), with reference to the Le Nain brothers and Georges de La Tour. Francesco Frangi (2000) correctly attributed it to the Master of the Blue Jeans.

The second version known of this painting, to which Alessandro Morandotti drew my attention, differs from the Milanese composition: a feather is set into the young boy's hat, the flesh tones are ruddier, and the passages of shadow are less modulated. The picture surfaced at a recent sale in New York (Sotheby's, 19 May 1995, lot 146), and it passed through the art market in Madrid and a private collection before its purchase by the Canesso Gallery.

The two compositions show a woman sitting on the left, absorbed by her sewing tasks. Beside her a sleeping baby wrapped in swaddling clothes lies on a small carved bed. A young boy sits at the foot of the bed, his left hand behind his neck, staring at the viewer. In front of the bed we see a ceramic bowl with a metal spoon in it, an earthenware jug and a little bread bun, of a kind still found in Italy today. To the left, a basket is placed on the

ground, a tattered piece of cloth spilling out of it, next to a big roll of cloth and a ball of thread that complete the set of sewing items. As in the *Mother with Two Children* (cat. 9), the foreshortening of the jug and plate implies an elevated viewing angle. Our painter was apparently not interested in centralised perspective, which led R. Colace (1998) to interpret this as a lack of technical confidence. The Master of the Blue Jeans reveals his idea of depth by arranging space according to intervals: first the mother, then the bed, followed by the little boy, and finally the whole room, undefined as it is. In this respect he shows his proximity to Giacomo Francesco Cipper, known as il Todeschini, several of whose works include a child in swaddling clothes lying on a bed (see fig. 3 p. 13). The small bed and its simple motifs, as well as how it is assembled, is typical of rural Italy, or more specifically of its Alpine regions, and was in widespread use until the eighteenth century (as communicated on 9 April 2010 by C. Witt-Döring, to whom we are grateful). It is for this reason that the artist has been associated with the culture of Northern Italy, quite distinct from an attribution to a French painter. While the furniture and crockery clearly suggest a rural milieu, the woman dressed in torn clothing might be taken for a beggar, were it not for her professional absorption. The frayed parts of her apron display the white warp thread typical of Genoese cloth. The boy's trousers, and probably the pillow under the baby's head, would be prepared with the same material. The boy is dressed in ragged clothing, too. He seems to be aware of his sad condition, and touches the viewer with his contemplative, impassive gaze. He looks forward to Ceruti, whose figures appear to know they are wretched (see cat. 14 and 15); and the interior, plunged into darkness, is no more detailed.

GERLINDE GRUBER



9. *Woman Begging with Two Children*

OIL ON CANVAS, 59 7/8 × 46 1/16 IN (152 × 117 CM)

PARIS, CANESSO GALLERY

LITERATURE

Gruber, in exh. cat., Brescia, 1998-1999, p. 425, no. 90; Frangi, 2000, II, pp. 1145-1162; Gruber, in Frangi and Morandotti, 2004, pp. 156-161; Gruber, in exh. cat., Milan, 2006, pp. 128-133; Gruber, 2006, pp. 159-161, fig. 241.

EXHIBITED

Brescia, 1998-1999, p. 425, no. 90; Milan, 2006, pp. 128-133.

According to an oral tradition, from 1850 the painting was housed in the Villa Airoidi in Albiate, north of Milan, where it was still recorded at the end of the twentieth century. Bought by Luigi Koelliker in Rome in 2002, it was recently acquired by the Canesso Gallery, where conservation enabled a certain number of details to reappear or become more readable. The composition represents a mother and her two children, dressed in worn clothing. Her right arm reveals the remains of a slashed sleeve worn over a second, brick-red sleeve with buttons adorning a cuff made of different material and colour (see the essay by Marzia Cataldi Gallo in this catalogue). The woman is shown leaning on a crutch as she addresses the viewer, proffering a begging bowl. Next to her, a young girl also directs her absent stare out of the picture space. Under her apron, she carries a small pouch with a small loaf of bread sticking out of it – a detail that had remained invisible until recent conservation, and which might contradict the begging gestures of the woman and child; but such an interpretation would not be suited to the Master of the Blue Jeans' habitual neutrality in depicting people in the same circumstances.

With the exception of one corner of a wall, once again visible after recent conservation, the composition concentrates on three individuals who seem simply to have paused during their walk from left to right as they show

the spectacle of their wretched condition, with dignity. In the immediate foreground, a container full of embers suggests a chilly temperature. In the context of allegory, this would be an attribute of winter (Huys Janssen in exh. cat., The Hague – Leuven, 2002-2003, p. 121, no. 16, pp. 168-169, no. 97), but it seems unlikely that this was the artist's intention, since this would be his sole composition in an allegorical vein. His aim, rather, was to show poverty with realism and a relative monumentality, reinforced by the realist detail of a container of embers, a direct allusion to the cold suffered by these poor people.

As regards style, the painting can be connected with the artists of the Lombard-Veneto area: the face of the mother with an upturned nose touched by reflected light on its tip, recalls the *Common Man with a Bonnet* by the young Antonio Cifrondi (Lovere, Accademia Tadini; see Dal Poggetto, 1982, p. 403, illus., pp. 502-503, no. 137). The colouring, adoption of marked chiaroscuro and the sloping ground are also typical of Giacomo Francesco Cipper, known as Todeschini, in his early works (see fig. 3 p. 13). These elements allow us to date our painting approximately to the last quarter of the seventeenth century. The depiction of poverty, described with such sensitivity, and – what is more – in works of such relatively large scale, reveal our anonymous master to be a true precursor of Giacomo Ceruti (see cat. 14 and 15).

GERLINDE GRUBER



10. *A Frugal Meal with Two Children*

OIL ON CANVAS, 30 × 46 IN (76.2 × 116.7 CM)

PARIS, CANESSO GALLERY

LITERATURE

Cappelletti, in exh. cat., Brescia, 1998-1999, pp. 302-303, fig. 9, p. 305, note 67; Gruber, 2006, p. 163, fig. 245; Pulini, in exh. cat., London, 2006, pp. 64-65; Pulini, in exh. cat., Brescia, 2007, pp. 78-81, no. 15; Pulini, in Orlando, 2008, pp. 86-89, no. 14.

The *Frugal Meal with Two Children*, formerly in the collection of Luigi Koelliker in Milan, has been rightly connected with the painting in the Museum of Fine Arts in Ghent (cat. 6) by Francesca Cappelletti, who was only aware of it through a photographic reproduction. The composition shows an old woman seated with two children at a table with a less elevated viewing point than the *Frugal Meal* in Ghent, although the same objects appear in each of these pictures. The still life in the centre consists of a dark bowl and a ceramic dish that also appears in the Ghent painting, behind a second bowl with a chip in its rim. In the foreground, the position of a spoon and bread bun are reversed with respect to how they appear in the *Frugal Meal* (cat. 5 and 6) and the *Woman Sewing with Two Children* (cat. 7 and 8). The young boy is seen feeding the girl while the old woman looks out of the picture space. The glasses worn by the woman reflect the realistic approach of the Master of the Blue Jeans. These are so-called frontal spectacles, used from the sixteenth century onwards. "These glasses were worn by women and people of elevated social status, allowing them to avoid removing their head-covering" (Rossi, 1989, p. 49). A mounted stem following the curve of the forehead, and usually foldable, would enable wearers to stick it into their hair or under a wig, or (as in this case) between the hair and scarf of the old woman. This stem was made of metal and is hardly visible in our painting, where it appears to be made of thread. However, the painting has suffered a little, which might indicate that this element was originally more visible. If we compare the *Frugal Meal with Two Children* with

the *Frugal Meal* in Ghent and the one in the Canesso Gallery (cat. 5 and 6), which are identical in subject, it is clear that all three pictures have uniformly dark backgrounds, and that the boy's collar recurs in a similar way, its folds painted with finely shaded dark strokes. The way the woman holds the ceramic plate recalls the pose of the other old woman in the Ghent and Canesso paintings (where she only uses one hand to hold the plate), and the motif of the damaged tablecloth recurs in both compositions. The Master of the Blue Jeans borrowed repeatedly from an established repertoire of images. Cappelletti referred to the Le Nain brothers both for our painting and the *Frugal Meal*, and bearing in mind their contrasts of light and shade, she interpreted the pictures as "an instance of distantly-echoed Caravaggism", dating them to the 1620s or 1630s, which seems to me a little early (Cappelletti, 1998, p. 303). Andrea G. De Marchi then drew her attention to this painting, suggesting that the author of both compositions could have been Jean Michelin (c. 1623-1696), a follower of the Le Nain brothers (Cappelletti, 1998, p. 305, note 67). We know this painter only through paintings of small figures, without strong contrasts of light, and usually in small formats. Moreover, Michelin never depicts the scene in as spare a manner as ours; and the way he integrates his figures is based on a detailed study of their attitudes. This painting stands apart from the better-preserved works of our artist, and the photograph published by Cappelletti attests to the state of the painting before conservation.

GERLINDE GRUBER



11. *Woman Spinning with Two Children*

OIL ON CANVAS, 35 <sup>7</sup>/<sub>16</sub> × 45 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> IN (90 × 115 CM)

PARIS, CANESSO GALLERY

LITERATURE

Eeckhout, 1960, I, p. 377, II, fig. 167b; Gruber, 2006, p. 168, note 33.

Like *The Frugal Meal* (cat. 5), this painting has a provenance from a private collection in Imperia, where it was housed since 1947, after having been in the Anselmi collection in Porto Maurizio (near Imperia), when it was believed to be a Flemish work. Paul Eeckhout regarded it as a copy of a lost original by the same hand as the painting in Ghent (cat. 6). He no doubt reached this conclusion because the canvas that acts as its pendant is somewhat more elevated, both in style and execution, and thus allows us to question whether the two paintings were truly pendants, created together as regards chronology. Perhaps the *Woman Spinning with Two Children* was a replica of an earlier picture by the artist. Its uniformly dark background lends a certain gravity to the composition, but we may wonder whether it was lighter, originally. The gaping hole in our woman's apron should reveal the underlying skirt – and we might expect that to be blue, made of Genoese cloth – but all we can see here is a black patch, suggesting the pigment may have altered over time. Quite apart from these remarks, this scene makes an immediate impact on the viewer. In the centre, an old woman, apparently blind in one eye, is shown seated; she is spinning and has a surly expression. To her right, a little boy dressed in finer clothing holds a stick and a beaker, and he also looks out at the viewer. The red and

yellow tones are unusual in the small corpus of works attributed to the Master of the Blue Jeans; the blue fabric is missing but it may have been there originally, as I suggested above. In fact all the other female figures painted by our artist wear a skirt or apron made of this material. The boy on the right appears to be arranging his jacket. The strong impression left by this image lies in the uncompromising depiction of the old woman's visual handicap. Paintings of blind people in the seventeenth century are not rare, and not only in a proverbial context, as seen in one of Pieter Brueghel the Elder's pictures (Naples, Galleria Nazionale di Capodimonte). Georges de La Tour's blind hurdy-gurdy players were certainly an important point of reference for the Master of the Blue Jeans (see the essay by Frangi and Morandotti in this catalogue), and the version in the Musée des Beaux-Arts in Nantes shows the singer full-length, in a realistic context, and truly inhabited by the music. However, the blind individuals of La Tour cannot have true visual contact with the beholder, whereas our old spinning woman gives us a harsh stare with her good eye.

The very dark background contributes even more to the dramatic tone of the composition, unlike the scene with blind musicians by La Tour, who play before a light brown background.

GERLINDE GRUBER



## 12. *The Barber's Shop*

OIL ON CANVAS, 59 × 45 1/4 IN (150 × 115 CM)

PARIS, CANESSO GALLERY

### LITERATURE

Damian, 2006, pp. 56-59; Gruber, 2006, pp. 164-165, fig. 248.

*The Barber's Shop* was catalogued in 2004 by Christie's in New York as a work of the seventeenth-century Neapolitan School (sale, 23 January, lot 6), but the author of the entry had already noted that it was by the same hand as the *Frugal Meal* in Ghent (cat. 6). In 1975, the picture was with Wildenstein in Paris (letter of 27 May 1975 to P. Eeckhout; documentation on the *Frugal Meal* in the Museum voor Schone Kunsten, Ghent). Francesco Frangi attributed this painting to the Master of the Blue Jeans, and it was published as such by Véronique Damian in 2006. The image represents a barber – in the seventeenth century this profession was exercised above all by men (Woschitz, 1994, pp. 27-28) – applying himself to the head of a seated man, who sits with a torn cloth about his shoulders as he looks out of the picture space. A young apprentice assists the barber by holding a majolica dish with a depression in its rim, designed to be placed under the chin to collect excess shaving soap. This is a type of ceramic called North Italian marble ware, produced



Fig. 1 — Master of the Blue Jeans (after), *The Barber's Shop*, Varese, Santuario del Sacro Monte, Museo Baroffio.

mainly in Pisa, but also in northern pottery centres during the first half of the seventeenth century (information provided by Alexandra van Dongen in an e-mail of June 19, 2010: see Hurst, Neal and Beuningen, 1986, pp. 33-37). The apprentice also turns his gaze towards the beholder. Placed on a stool in the foreground are a double-sided comb, scissors, and a piece of white fabric – all entirely appropriate for a barber's shop. The scene takes place in front of a dark wall, punctuated by a small niche containing a flask, with what appears to be a mirror in a square frame hanging to its left. Notwithstanding these precise spatial notations, the viewer's attention is drawn to the protagonists, their presence enhanced by an elevated point of view typical of the Master of the Blue Jeans. As regards iconography, our artist explores a new area here, since the barber is actually shown busy with his customer. The painter no longer represents the classic scene of the tooth-puller, nor a surgical operation (Schneider, 2004, p. 184, fig. 114). We should note that there exists a whole series of paintings of *The Extraction of the Stone of Madness* in which surgery is performed on a patient's head, a visual source that could have provided a direct inspiration for our artist. To cite but one example that stands close to ours, the subject was painted by Giacomo Francesco Cipper in a canvas at the Musée Malraux, Le Havre (see exh. cat., Chambéry – Le Havre – Reims, 2005-2006, p. 86, no. 17). The only known representation of a barber cutting a client's hair in a shop appears in a painting attributed to Quiringh van Brekelenkam (The Hague, RKD, iconographic photo library, under "barber"), though with a far more modest format, and with smaller figures; for this reason we cannot compare it with our picture. The author of the monograph on Brekelenkam lists two similar scenes, with uncertain attributions (Lasius, 1992, p. 88-89). This new chapter in iconography reveals our artist's interest in reality, expressed through close observation of scenes taken from daily life.

This composition had a certain success, as reflected by a copy (146 × 116 cm) now in the Museo Baroffio (Santuario del Sacro Monte a Varese, inv. 83; fig. 1), with a very probable provenance from the collection of Baron Giuseppe Baroffio Dall'Aglio (Brescia, 1859 – Azzate, 1929).

GERLINDE GRUBER



13. *Peasants Dining with a Young Flute Player*

OIL ON CANVAS, 56  $\frac{11}{16}$  × 44  $\frac{7}{8}$  IN (144 × 114 CM)

ROME, PRIVATE COLLECTION

LITERATURE

Damian, 2008, pp. 26-31.

Like our Master of the Blue Jeans, Cipper became a specialist in painting scenes dominated by groups of figures seated around a table, and sustained by a taste for still life, which he took to its highest level. At the centre of this composition, simple fare – bread, cheese, salami in a piece of paper, and some roasted chestnuts – is arranged on a pale, thick tablecloth, unspoiled by tears. All these elements, as well as the jug of wine, and the bowl and spoon held by the young girl, are described with true concern for verisimilitude, without any restraint, so that this meal appears appetising, and worthy of the young woman who is using the occasion to show off her finery, as we can see from the overly demonstrative bows. The old woman behind her, painted in dark brown against a light brown background, seems amused by the young couple's flirting, while the little girl – probably a beggar, given the wretched state of her clothing, and the stick lying across her lap – contentedly consumes a bowl of broth; one can almost read happiness in the directness of her gaze. It is hard to understand whether the scene takes place in an interior or outdoors, perhaps in the yard of an inn. As often happens in Cipper, the composition is divided from top to bottom by a pillar, an expedient that allows the artist to break up the space; the same idea recurs with the rough-hewn stone that serves as a bench in the foreground. The painting is handled brilliantly, and may be compared to another late work by the artist, the *Peasant Meal with a Young Beggar Girl* (whereabouts unknown), dated to 1725/1730, almost in the last years of Cipper's career, by Maria Silvia Proni (1994, pp. 124-125); the same model is used for the young woman in both pictures. In any case, we believe our composition should be placed after 1720, and Gerlinde Gruber concurs. The foreground area is painted with a lively, bright palette, with a predominance of blues and reds, while the background figures are described in grisaille and show a lighter and more sparing use of pigment. These last two figures are highlighted in white with the tip of the paintbrush, and these luminous touches break the

almost monochrome harmony. If it is not unreasonable to imagine that such paintings also contain hidden, symbolic meanings, the three female figures could allude to the three ages of life, and it is touching to note that the most precarious and destitute of these are childhood and old age. The picture as a whole then becomes a magnificent hymn to life, with music coming from the young recorder player in the background. The half-amused, half mocking expression on the face of the young woman – openly courted by her male counterpart – seems to invite the viewer to think of the famous dictum *carpe diem* by the Epicurean poet Horace, who urged his readers to seize the present without worrying about the future. It is also through a play of intersecting gazes, like a series of silent questions, that the painting reveals the ties that bind it to our anonymous Master, and to Giacomo Ceruti (1698-1767), whose painted gazes probe the viewer without expecting compassion. Nonetheless, these scenes describe precise actions, like those of the women spinning, embroidering, sewing, or begging, or that of the barber, each one of them contributing their industrious humanity to the great current of "painting of reality". The painting comes from the Busiri Vici collection in Rome, and is now in a Roman private collection after its purchase by the Canesso Gallery. Modern scholarship has finally taken a more accurate view of this Austrian-born painter, and he should be considered an integral part of Lombard genre painting (see, most recently, exh. cat. Chambéry – Le Havre – Reims, 2005-2006). His presence is recorded in Milan in 1696 – that is, ten years before Lombardy was placed under Austrian rule – and he was active there until his death in 1736. His sojourn coincides fully with the keen interest aroused between 1670 and 1740 by the painting of reality, a movement he adhered to, in the period between Pietro Bellotti (1625-1700), the Danish painter Eberhard Keilhau, known as Monsù Bernardo (1624-1687), and Giacomo Ceruti (1698-1767).

VÉRONIQUE DAMIAN



## 14. *A Woman making Wickerwork*

OIL ON CANVAS, 49 1/4 × 55 15/16 IN (125 × 142 CM)

CITY OF MONTICHIARI (NEAR BRESCIA), LECHI COLLECTION

### LITERATURE

Gregori, 1982, pp. 42, 45, 203, 435, no. 60 (with earlier literature); Frangi, in exh. cat., Brescia, 1987, pp. 97, 174, under no. 20, p. 175, no. 21; Zani, in exh. cat., Brescia, 1998-1999, p. 432 note 1.

### EXHIBITED

Brescia, 1935, p. xxxii, no. 92, p. 28, illus. vi; Zurich, 1948-1949, no. 783; Milan, 1953, p. 74, no. 156 and fig. 156; Paris, 1960-1961, no. 471 (not illus.); Brescia, 1987, pp. 97, 174, under no. 20, 175, no. 21.

This painting forms part of what has conventionally been named the “Padernello cycle”, a group of fifteen large-scale canvases with popular subjects most probably commissioned from Ceruti by the noble Avogadro family of Brescia. These were painted during the artist’s extended sojourn in that city, ending in 1734. Ceruti is then recorded in Gandino (Bergamo), on his way to Venice. In about 1809 the collection passed to the Counts Fenaroli, who dispersed it in a great sale in Brescia in 1882; however, the *Woman making Wickerwork* is not mentioned in the Fenaroli catalogue of 1820. In the 1882 sale the *pitocchi* (beggars) by Ceruti were acquired by the Salvadego family, who displayed them in their castle at Padernello, near Brescia. The cycle as a whole was still there when it was discovered relatively early in the twentieth century by Giuseppe Delogu (1931, p. 315, 322, 331) and almost immediately exhibited in Brescia in 1935, thus revealing to the public an almost forgotten artist (Emma Calabi, in exh. cat., Brescia, 1935, p. xxxii, no. 92, p. 28, illus. vi). This group of pictures, with epic treatment given to paupers, peasants and minor artisans (both female and male), each one exemplary and unique in this particular field of the painting of reality, would lead in 1736 to the masterly *Three Beggars* painted for Marshal Schulenburg in Venice (now in Madrid, Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza), a work that elevates the state of poverty to a spiritual level and shifts a reading of it from negative to positive. The composition of the *Woman making Wickerwork*, with the figure set against a dark wall that serves as background, is surprising for its choice of a profile format. Portrayed weaving little twigs of willow, the subject seems to us to be lost in thought as she stares straight ahead of her. Making use of a stone to seat herself outdoors, the woman is not defined by the clear light of day but rather by a half-penumbra that accentuates her solitude, suggesting deep existential pondering. Using broad, swift and expressive brushstrokes, Ceruti applies himself to an attentive study of the torn, frayed clothes laid over one another so as to make her almost disappear under these accumulated fabrics. Only her brick red coat stands out from the brown and grey-white tones. Our recognition of the artist’s skill

in portrait painting is accompanied here by an apparent contradiction, for he does not show the model’s direct gaze, preferring an external view that focuses more on her condition than her physical features. Ceruti shares with our Master of the Blue Jeans a refusal to indulge in expression – but not in expressiveness – and offers us a “silent”, introspective image. Poverty serves as this woman’s identity while she keeps her mystery to herself and, in the absence of any eye contact (the mirror of the soul), she does not actively solicit the viewer’s empathy. If – as art historians have often underlined – these subjects owe a debt to the series of etchings of beggars by Jacques Callot (1592-1635), published a century earlier in Nancy, in about 1622-1623, Ceruti’s conceptual approach was different, with an emphasis given to interior qualities and the depiction of contemporary daily existence – that of Italy in crisis. If one wanted to think of an equivalent in Callot, the *Beggar Woman with a Rosary* (a figure also shown in profile) might come to mind, but Ceruti is distinct from this in his search for a moral compass; through their activities these poor people retain their dignity, without being complacent in their passive existence. The *Woman making Wickerwork* has a formal (and male) echo in the *Beggar Resting* (private collection) which has the same composition and practically identical dimensions, though one cannot state with certainty that the two pictures properly function as pendants. The man stares directly at the viewer with self-confidence, something our old woman avoids with a will of her own, thus creating a sense of quiet modesty, which in another context might have been taken for conscious femininity. Giacomo Ceruti stands apart as a talented interpreter of naturalist painting, an artist who dwelt as much on his models as on their philosophical significance, which was to find a legacy in the Milanese *Illuminismo* movement that touched the art of Alessandro Magnasco (1667-1749). Historians have been fond of drawing attention to its later echoes during the century that followed, especially in the grand narrative and social portraits of Gustave Courbet (1819-1877), to cite but one example.

VÉRONIQUE DAMIAN



## 15. *Two Young Porters Playing Cards*

OIL ON CANVAS, 55 1/8 × 61 IN (140 × 155 CM)

BRESCIA, PRIVATE COLLECTION

### LITERATURE

Gregori, 1982, pp. 56, 214, fig. 66, 436-437, no. 66 (with earlier literature); Bona Castellotti, 1986, fig. 178; Frangi, in exh. cat., Brescia, 1987, p. 102, 176, no. 26; Anelli, 1994, pp. 317-319, fig. 11; Terzaghi, in exh. cat., Brescia, 1998-1999, p. 241, p. 437, no. 111; Risaliti, in exh. cat., Mantua, 2004, pp. 30, XXI.

### EXHIBITED

Brescia, 1935, p. XXXII, no. 102, p. 28; Milan, 1973, unnumbered; Brescia, 1987, p. 176, no. 226, p. 102, fig. 26; Brescia, 1998-1999, p. 241, 437, no. 111; Mantua, 2004, p. 30, unnumbered.

Like the preceding painting (cat. 14), to which we refer the reader for provenance, the *Two Young Porters Playing Cards* also belongs to the “Padernello cycle”, a group of fifteen large-scale pictures with popular subjects most probably commissioned from Ceruti by the noble Avogadro family of Brescia and painted between 1720 and 1734, the year he left for Gandino (Bergamo) and then Venice, where he worked for Marshal Schulenburg. Here, however, we are involved on a less dramatic register, and viewers can amuse themselves in observing two boys playing cards, gambling away the money they have made after work, as suggested by the empty basket lying on its side, which provides a seat for one of the two protagonists. The boy on the right sits on a stone and is shown pushing his coin between two pieces of dry willow while his companion shuffles the pack of cards. The theme of playing, associated with the world of childhood, enables the artist – albeit still within the conventions of the painting of reality – to insert an element of freshness and ingenuousness and thus provide new aspects of popular life that coincide perfectly with the carefree aspect of youth. We are witnessing a pastime, enjoyed after the hard labour of carrying large baskets loaded with provisions. The architectural background, lightly sketched in with pale brown tones, lets us know that we are in the town square, perhaps at vespers, since some people can be seen going into the church. Others busy themselves under the arcades, thus implying the presence of shops. Placed before this setting, our two young boys, barefooted and both dressed in simple shirts and short trousers, are held captive by the game. The two faces, seen in profile (three-quarter profile on the right), are clearly detached from the background by means of a dark line defining their contour, and more generally the whole contour of each figure. These life-size figures emerge from the canvas in the immediate foreground, almost inviting the viewer

to join in the game as their proximity seems so tangible. Nothing distracts from the little drama unfolding before us, that of the unfortunate loser who must return home penniless after having worked so hard for his earnings. In fact the artist makes a point of using red pigment for their faces to convey their emotion and life-like presence – the same pure red used for the cap in the middle of the composition. What strikes one is that no expression of joy brightens these fresh young faces; on the contrary, they are resolutely serious and concentrated for their age. For its highly finished quality, as much for the handling of flesh tones as for the painstaking attention to motifs, Mina Gregori dates this painting to the end of the artist’s sojourn in Brescia. A painting of the same subject now in a private collection – similarly composed but with a different treatment, proving the artist disliked repeating himself – attests to its success (Gregori, 1982, p. 434, no. 58). Mina Gregori has also pointed out the existence of an early copy of our composition (Bettoni Cazzago collection). The two paintings by Ceruti exhibited here reveal two distinct facets of his talent, which reflected the highest level of the “pauper painting” genre, which he practiced in Lombardy and the Veneto. The fact that the Austrian painter Cipper (known as il Todeschini; 1664-1736) and Ceruti lived in the same neighbourhood of Milan at the beginning of the eighteenth century, made the city, and Lombardy in general, a melting-pot for the painting of reality (see Anelli, 1982) – and in this context we may include Antonio Cifrondi (1657-1730), who after a French sojourn arrived in Brescia in 1725, where he certainly had occasion to frequent Ceruti. The region was always open to this kind of painting, even when it came from further north, as we can tell from the documented presence in the middle of the eighteenth century of another foreigner, the Danish painter Eberhard Keilhau (1624-1687), who was active in Bergamo and Milan between 1654 and 1656.

VÉRONIQUE DAMIAN



# Bibliography

## GENERAL WORKS

### Anelli 1994

L. Anelli, "Giacomo Ceruti. Un quadro di caccia e alcune altre cose bresciane", in *Scritti in onore di Gaetano Panazza*, Brescia, 1994, pp. 312-313

### Anelli 1996

L. Anelli, *Pietro Bellotti 1625-1700*, Brescia, 1996

### Angelini 1943

L. Angelini, *I Baschenis, pittori bergamaschi*, Bergamo, 1943

### Anquetil 1999

J. Anquetil, *Les routes du coton: l'épopée de l'or blanc*, Paris, 1999

### Bautier 1943

P. Bautier, *Tableaux de l'école Espagnole en Belgique. Publication des Musées Royaux*, Brussels, 1943

### Bentivoglio Ravasio 1993

R. Bentivoglio Ravasio, "Baschenis, Evaristo", in *Saur Allgemeines Künstler-Lexikon: die Bildenden Künstler aller Zeiten und Völker*, VII, Munich and Leipzig, 1993, pp. 344-346

### Bergström 1975

M. Bergström, "Baschenis, Bettera & Co.", *The Art Bulletin*, LVII, 1975, pp. 287-288

### Biancale 1912

M. Biancale, "Evaristo Baschenis, dipintore degli antichi liuti italiani", *L'Arte*, XV, 1912, pp. 321-344

### Bona Castellotti 1986

M. Bona Castellotti, *La pittura lombarda del '700*, Milan, 1986

### Borlandi 1953

F. Borlandi, "'Futainiers' et futaines dans l'Italie du Moyen Âge", in F. Braudel, ed., *Éventail de l'histoire vivante. Hommage à Lucien Febvre*, Paris, 1953, II, pp. 133-140

### Cappelletti 1998

F. Cappelletti, "A Roma, dopo Caravaggio. Le 'figure moderne', qualche pittore straniero", in Brescia, 1998-1999, pp. 295-305

### Cataldi Gallo 2005

M. Cataldi Gallo, "Jeans per caso", in Prato 2005, pp. 15-25

### Cataldi Gallo 2007a

M. Cataldi Gallo, *Mezzari and the cotton route. I mezzari e la via del cotone*, Genoa, 2007

### Cataldi Gallo 2007b

M. Cataldi Gallo, *Passione in Blu. I teli con storie della Passione del XVI secolo a Genova*, Genoa, 2007

### Cataldi Gallo 2008

M. Cataldi Gallo, "I teli quaresimali con le Storie della Passione di Genova", *Arte lombarda*, no. 153, 2008, pp. 75-87

### Chabot 1951

G. Chabot, *Het Museum voor Schone Kunsten te Gent. Geschiedkundig Overzicht*, Brussels, 1951

### Champfleury 1862

J. Champfleury, *Les peintres de la réalité sous Louis XIII. Les frères Le Nain*, Paris, 1862 [1863 on the cover]

### Dal Poggetto 1982

P. Dal Poggetto, "Antonio Cifrondi", in *I pittori bergamaschi dal XIII al XIX secolo. Il Settecento*, I, Bergamo, 1982, pp. 359-619

### Damian 2006

V. Damian, *Deux tableaux de la collection Sannes. Tableaux des écoles émilienne et lombarde*, Paris, 2006, pp. 56-59

### Damian 2008

V. Damian, *Un Euclide retrouvé de Domenico Maroli et figures de la réalité en Italie du nord*, Paris, 2008, pp. 26-31

### Delogu 1931

G. Delogu, "Jacopo Ceruti, 'il Pitocchetto'", in *Pittori minori liguri, piemontesi, lombardi del Seicento e del Settecento*, Venice, 1931, pp. 195-210

### Delogu 1949

G. Delogu, "Novità su Jacopo Ceruti, detto il Pitocchetto e sul Cipper-Todeschini", *Emporium*, 109, 1949, pp. 108-114

### Delogu 1962

G. Delogu, *La natura morta italiana*, Bergamo, 1962

### Eeckhout 1960

P. Eeckhout, "Le 'repas frugal' du musée de Gand", in *Varia Velazqueña. Homenaje a Velázquez en el III centenario de su muerte 1660-1960*, Madrid, 1960, I, pp. 373-377

### Eigenberger 1927

R. Eigenberger, *Die Gemäldegalerie der Akademie der bildenden Künste in Wien*, 2 Bde., Vienna and Leipzig, 1927

### Ericani and Frattaroli 1993

G. Ericani and P. Frattaroli, *Tessuti nel veneto. Venezia e la Terraferma*, Verona, 1993

### Ewing 1984

E. Ewing, *Everyday dress, 1650-1900*, London, 1984

### Fennell Mazzaoui 1981

M. Fennell Mazzaoui, *The Italian cotton industry in the later Middle Ages, 1100-1600*, Cambridge, 1981

**Frangi 1991**

F. Frangi, "Ceresa e Baschenis", in M. Gregori, ed., *Pittura a Bergamo dal Romanico al Neoclassicismo*, Milan, 1991, pp. 38-44, 273-277

**Frangi 1998**

F. Frangi, "L'immagine dei poveri tra genere, realtà e cultura assistenziale: riflessioni in margine al ciclo di Padernello di Giacomo Ceruti", in Brescia 1998-1999, pp. 43-61

**Frangi 2000**

F. Frangi, "Dai pitocchi al 'buon villan'. Metamorfosi della pittura di genere a Milano negli anni di Parini", in G. Barbarisi, C. Capra, F. Degrada, F. Mazzocca, eds., *L'amabil rito. Società e cultura nella Milano di Parini* (symposium papers, Milan, 1999), Bologna, 2000, II, pp. 1145-1162

**Frangi and Morandotti 2004**

F. Frangi and A. Morandotti, *Dipinti Lombardi del Seicento. Collezione Koelliker*, Turin, 2004

**Frimmel 1901**

T. von Frimmel, *Geschichte der Wiener Gemäldesammlungen, Viertes Capitel. Die Galerie in der Akademie der bildenden Künste*, Leipzig and Berlin, 1901

**Frimmel 1913**

T. von Frimmel, *Lexikon der Wiener Gemäldesammlungen. A-F*, Munich, 1913

**Gatti Perer 1998**

M. L. Gatti Perer, ed., *Fondazione Cassa di Risparmio delle Province Lombarde. Le collezioni d'arte dal Classico al Neoclassico*, Milan, 1998

**Gentile 1981**

A. Gentile, *Dizionario etimologico dell'arte tessile*, Naples, 1981

**Ghent 1909**

*Ville de Gand. Catalogue du Musée des Beaux-arts, publié par les soins de la commission directrice*, Ghent, 1909

**Ghent 1938**

*Stad Gent. Museum voor Schoone Kunsten, Catalogus, Oude Meesters. Schilderstukken, teekeningen, plaatsneden*, Gand, 1938

**Gorguet-Ballesteros 1994**

P. Gorguet-Ballesteros, *Jean, denim, jeans: deux noms, deux étoffes, une forme. Recherche sur leurs origines*, in Paris 1994-1995, pp. 25-38

**Gregori 1969**

M. Gregori, "Seicento, arte 'moderna', arte di domani", *Arte illustrata*, II, no. 22-24, 1969, pp. 103-109

**Gregori 1982**

M. Gregori, *Giacomo Ceruti*, Bergamo, 1982

**Gregori 2010**

M. Gregori, "Un'avventura attribuzionistica con un esito imprevisto", *Paragone*, LXI, no. 89, 2010, pp. 3-10.

**Griseri 1953**

A. Griseri, "Bilancio di una mostra: i pittori della realtà in Lombardia", *Emporium*, CXVIII, no. 59, 1953, pp. 57-68

**Gruber 2006**

G. Gruber, "Il Maestro della tela jeans: un nuovo pittore della realtà nell'Europa del tardo Seicento", *Nuovi Studi*, 11, 2006 [2007], pp. 159-170

**Haraszti-Takács 1983**

M. Haraszti-Takács, *Spanish Genre Painting in the Seventeenth Century*, Budapest, 1983

**Hardouin-Fugier, Berthod, and Chavent-****Fusaro 1994**

E. Hardouin-Fugier, B. Berthod, and M. Chavent-Fusaro, "Futaine", in *Les Étoffes. Dictionnaire historique*, Paris, 1994, p. 199

**Hartje 2004**

N. Hartje, *Bartolomeo Manfredi (1582-1622): ein Nachfolger Caravaggios und seine europäische Wirkung*, Weimar, 2004

**Heimbürger 1988**

M. Heimbürger, *Bernardo Keilhau detto Monsù Bernardo*, Rome, 1988

**Hoozee 1988**

R. Hoozee, *Musée des Beaux-Arts, Gand*, Brussels, 1988

**Hoozee and Tahon-Vanroose 1989**

R. Hoozee and M. Tahon-Vanroose, *Museum voor Schone Kunsten Gent / Museum of Fine Arts Ghent*, Ghent, 1989

**Hoozee 2000**

R. Hoozee, *Museum of Fine Arts Ghent, Paintings*, Ghent, 2000

**Hurst, Neal, and Beuningen 1986**

J. G. Hurst, D. S. Neal, and H. J. E. van Beuningen, *Pottery produced and traded in North-west Europe 1350-1650*, Rotterdam, 1986

**Ivanoff 1965**

N. Ivanoff, "Bellotti, Pietro", in *Dizionario biografico degli italiani*, VII, Rome, 1965, pp. 795-796

**Jacoby 1999**

D. Jacoby, "Genoa silk trade and silk manufacture in the Mediterranean region (ca. 1100-1300)", in A. R. Calderoni Masetti, C. Di Fabio, M. Marcenaro, eds., *Tessuti, oreficerie, miniature in Liguria XIII-XV secolo. Atti del convegno internazionale di studi* (symposium papers, Genoa-Bordighera, 1997), Bordighera, 1999, pp. 11-40

**Klijn 1987**

E. M. Ch. F. Klijn, *Eet- en sierlepels in Nederland tot ca. 1850*, Lochem and Ghent, 1987

**Kultzen 1996**

R. Kultzen, *Michael Sweerts Brussels 1618 – Goa 1664*, Doornspijk, 1996

**Lasius 1992**

A. Lasius, *Quiringh van Brekelenkam*, Doornspijk, 1992

**Lemire 1991**

B. Lemire, *Fashion's favourite. The cotton trade and the consumer in Britain, 1660-1800*, Oxford, 1991

**Levey 1998**

S. Levey, *An Elizabethan inheritance. The Hardwick Hall Textiles*, London, 1998

**Longhi 1935**

R. Longhi, "I pittori della realtà in Francia", in *Opere complete. XI. Studi caravaggeschi, II (1935-1969)*, Florence, 2000, pp. 1-11

**Longhi 1938**

R. Longhi, "Monsù Bernardo", in *Opere complete. XII. Studi e ricerche sul Seicento e sul Settecento (1929-1970)*, Florence, 1991, pp. 103-114

**Longhi 1953**

R. Longhi, "Dal Moroni al Ceruti", in *Opere complete. XII. Studi e ricerche sul Seicento e sul Settecento (1929-1970)*, Florence, 1991, pp. 1-16

**Lützow 1889**

C. von Lützow, *Katalog der Gemälde-Galerie der Akademie der bildenden Künste in Wien*, Vienna, 1889

**Lützow 1900**

C. von Lützow, *Katalog der Gemälde-Galerie der Akademie der Bildenden Künste*, 2. Aufl., Vienna, 1900

**Mayer 1940**

A. L. Mayer, "Paintings by Pietro Bellotti", *The Burlington Magazine*, LXXVII, 1940, pp. 93-94

**Morassi 1967**

A. Morassi, "Giacomo Ceruti detto il 'Pitocchetto' pittore verista", *Pantheon*, XXV, 1967, pp. 348-367

**Moulin 1988**

L. Moulin, *Europa aan tafel. Een cultuurgeschiedenis van eten en drinken*, Antwerp, 1988

**Muzzarelli 2000**

M. G. Muzzarelli, *Guardaroba medievale. Vesti e società dal XIII al XVI secolo*, Bologna, 2000

**Nichols 2007**

T. Nichols, *The Art of Poverty. Irony and Ideal in Sixteenth-Century Beggar Imagery*, Manchester, 2007

**Nougarède 1989**

M. Nougarède, "Denim: albero genealogico", in Genoa 1989-1990, pp. 32-34

**Orlando 2008**

A. Orlando, ed., *Pietro Bellotti e dintorni. Dipinti veneti e lombardi tra realtà e "Genere"*, Turin, 2008

**Pastoureau 2008**

M. Pastoureau, *Blu. Storia di un colore*, Florence, 2008

**Perrot 1995**

P. Perrot, *Le luxe. Une richesse entre faste et confort XVIII<sup>e</sup>-XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle*, Paris, 1995

**Pignatti 1953**

T. Pignatti, "An exhibition of Lombard 'Painters of reality'", *The Burlington Magazine*, XCV, 1953, p. 277

**Proni 1994**

M. S. Proni, *Giacomo Francesco Cipper detto il "Todeschini"*, Soncino, 1994

**Renger 2006**

K. Renger, "Alte Liebe, gleich und ungleich", in *Lehrhafte Laster. Aufsätze zur Ikonographie der niederländischen Kunst des 16. und 17. Jahrhunderts*, Munich, 2006, pp. 131-146 [first ed. in G. Cavalli-Björkman, ed., *Netherlandish Mannerism* (symposium, Nationalmuseum Stockholm, 1984), Stockholm, 1985, pp. 35-46]

**Risaliti 2004**

S. Risaliti, "Bambini nel tempo, il cerchio invisibile dell'infanzia", in Mantua, 2004, pp. 13-31

**Roche 1989**

D. Roche, *La Culture des apparences. Une histoire du vêtement XVII<sup>e</sup>-XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècles*, Paris, 1989

**Rosci 1971**

M. Rosci, *Baschenis, Bettera & Co. Produzione e mercato della natura morta del Seicento in Italia*, Milan, 1971

**Rossi 1989**

F. Rossi, *Brillen. Vom Leseglas zum modischen Accessoire*, Leipzig, 1989

**Rossi 1998**

M. Rossi, "Il lascito di Caterina Marcenaro alla Cariplo", in M. L. Gatti Perer, ed., *Fondazione Cassa di Risparmio delle Province Lombarde. Le collezioni d'arte dal Classico al Neoclassico*, Milan, 1998, pp. 28-41

**Ruggeri 1996**

U. Ruggeri, "Baschenis, Evaristo", in *The Dictionary of Art*, New York-London, 1996, III, pp. 321-322

**Schneider 2004**

N. Schneider, *Geschichte der Genremalerei. Die Entdeckung des Alltags in der Kunst der Frühen Neuzeit*, Berlin, 2004

**Schwemming 1873**

H. Schwemming, *Verzeichnis der Gemäldesammlung der K.K. Akademie der bildenden Künste*, Vienna, 1873

**Silvestrini 1989**

E. Silvestrini, "Aspetti iconografici e problematiche antropologiche nell'abbigliamento popolare ligure", in Genoa 1989-1990, pp. 61-65

**Spiriti 1998**

A. Spiriti, "Pittura barocca e rococò", in M. L. Gatti Perer, ed., *Fondazione Cassa di Risparmio delle Province Lombarde. Le collezioni d'arte dal Classico al Neoclassico*, Milan, 1998

**Styles 2007**

J. Styles, *The dress of the people. Everyday fashion in eighteenth-century England*, New Haven and London, 2007

**Tassi 1793**

F. M. Tassi, *Vite de' Pittori... bergamaschi*, Bergamo, 1793

**Testori 1953**

G. Testori, "Carlo Ceresa ritrattista", *Paragone*, 39, 1953, pp. 19-28

**Trnek 1989**

R. Trnek, *Gemäldegalerie der Akademie der Bildenden Künste in Wien: illustriertes Bestandsverzeichnis*, Vienna, 1989

**Trnek 1997**

R. Trnek, *Die Gemäldegalerie der Akademie der bildenden Künste in Wien: die Sammlung im Überblick*, Vienna, 1997

**Valsecchi 1972**

M. Valsecchi, "Ceresa-Baschenis: un incontro bergamasco", in M. Valsecchi, ed., *Ceresa-Baschenis nelle collezioni private bergamasche* (Bergamo, Galleria Lorenzelli, September 1972), Bergamo, 1972

**Volpe 1963**

C. Volpe, "Parlando del Ceruti", *Paragone*, 161, 1963, pp. 61-63

**Voss 1912**

H. Voss, "Antonio Amorosi, der falsche Spanier", *Der Cicerone*, IV, 1912, pp. 461-468

**Voss 1925**

H. Voss, *Die Malerei des römischen Barock*, Berlin, 1925

**Wadsworth and de Lacy Mann 1965**

A. P. Wadsworth and J. de Lacy Mann, *The Cotton trade and industrial Lancashire, 1600-1780*, Manchester, 1965 [first ed., 1931]

**Welch 2005**

E. Welch, *Shopping in the Renaissance. Consumer cultures in Italy, 1400-1600*, New Haven and London, 2005

**Wind 1987**

B. Wind, *Velazquez's Bodegones. A Study in Seventeenth-Century Spanish Genre Painting*, Fairfax, 1987

**Woschitz 1994**

R. Woschitz, *Die bürgerlichen Bader, Barbieri und Perückenmacher Wiens in der Barockzeit* (thesis), Vienna, 1994

**Zafran 2002**

E. M. Zafran, "Michael Sweerts in America: Collecting, Commerce and Scholarship", in Amsterdam, San Francisco, Hartford, 2002, pp. 56-66

**Zeri 1976**

F. Zeri, "La percezione visiva dell'Italia e degli italiani nella storia della pittura", in *Storia d'Italia*, XIX. *Atlante. Pittura e cartografia*, Turin, 1976, pp. 53-114

## EXHIBITION CATALOGUES

### Paris 1934

*Les Peintres de la réalité en France au XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris, Musée de l'Orangerie, 1934), Paris, 1934 [republished in P. Georgel, *Orangerie, 1934 : Les "Peintres de la réalité", avec la réimpression en fac-similé du catalogue de l'exposition de 1934 par Paul Jamot et Charles Sterling* (Paris, Musée de l'Orangerie, 22 November 2006-5 March 2007), Paris 2006, pp. 98-301]

### Brescia 1935

E. Callabi, ed., *La pittura a Brescia nel Seicento e nel Settecento*, Brescia, 1935

### Rome 1945

*Mostra d'arte italiana* (Rome, Museo Nazionale di Palazzo Venezia, 1945), Rome, 1945

### Zurich 1948-1949

*Kunstschätze der Lombardei* (Zurich, Kunsthhaus, November 1948-March 1949), Zurich, 1948

### Brussels, Liège, Luxembourg 1949

*Chefs-d'œuvre du musée des beaux-arts de Gand* (Bruxelles, Liège, Luxembourg), Brussels, 1949

### Milan 1953

G. Testori and R. Cipriani, eds., *I pittori della realtà in Lombardia* (Milan, Palazzo Reale, April-July 1953), Milan, 1953

### Paris 1960-1961

C. Gnudi, ed., *La peinture italienne au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris, Musée du Petit Palais, November 1960-January 1961), Paris, 1960

### Naples, Zurich, Rotterdam 1964-1965

*La natura morta italiana* (Naples, Palazzo Reale; Zurich, Kunsthhaus; Rotterdam, October 1964-March 1965), Milan, 1964

### Vienna 1969

*Unbekannte Schätze aus den Sammlungen der Akademie*. (Vienna, Akademie der bildenden Künste, 1969), Vienna, 1969

### Milan 1973

*Selezione 73* (Milan, Galleria Gilberto Algranti, 1973), Milan, 1973

### Brescia 1987

*Giacomo Ceruti Il Pitocchetto* (Brescia, Monastero di Santa Giulia, 13 June-31 October 1987), Milan, 1987

### Genoa 1989-1990

*Blu Blue-jeans. Il blu popolare* (Genoa, Palazzo San Giorgio, 25 November 1989-14 January 1990), Milan, 1989

### Milan 1993

M. T. Fiorio and M. Bona Castellotti, eds., *Un museo da scoprire. Dipinti antichi della Pinacoteca del Castello Sforzesco* (Milan, Castello Sforzesco, 7 April-6 June 1993), Milan, 1993

### Paris 1994-1995

C. Join-Diéterle, ed., *Histoires du jeans. De 1750 à 1994* (Paris, Palais Galliera, 25 October 1994-12 March 1995), Paris, 1994

### Bergamo 1996-1997

F. Rossi, ed., *Evaristo Baschenis e la natura morta in Europa* (Bergamo, Accademia Carrara, 4 October 1996-12 January 1997), Milan, 1996

### Brescia 1998-1999

F. Porzio, ed., *Da Caravaggio a Ceruti. La scena di genere e l'immagine dei pitocchi nella pittura italiana* (Brescia, Museo di Santa Giulia, 28 November 1998-28 February 1999), Milan, 1998

### New York 2000-2001

A. Bayer, ed., *The Still Lives of Evaristo Baschenis. The Music of Silence* (New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 17 November 2000-4 March 2001), New York and Milan, 2000

### Amsterdam, San Francisco, Hartford 2002

D. Bull, G. Jansen, and P. C. Sutton, eds., *Michael Sweerts (1618-1664)* (Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, 9 March-20 May 2002; San Francisco, Fine Arts Museums, 15 June-25 August 2002; Hartford, Wadsworth Atheneum, 19 September-1 December 2002), Zwolle, 2002

### Milan 2002

F. Frangi and A. Morandotti, eds., *Il ritratto in Lombardia da Moroni a Ceruti* (Varese, Castello di Masnago, 21 April-14 July 2002), Milan, 2002

### The Hague, Leuven 2002-2003

Y. Bruijnen and P. Huys Janssen, eds., *De Vier Jaargetijden in de kunst van de Nederlanden* (The Hague, Noordbrabants Museum, 21 December 2002-21 April 2003; Leuven, Stedelijk Museum Vander Kelen-Mertens, 10 May-3 August 2003), Zwolle, 2002

### Mantua 2004

L. Tozzato, ed., *Bambini nel tempo. L'infanzia e l'arte* (Mantua, Palazzo Te, 9 May-4 July 2004), Milan, 2004

### New York 2004

A. Bayer, ed., *Painters of Reality. The Legacy of Leonardo and Caravaggio in Lombardy*, (New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 27 May-15 August 2004), New Haven and London, 2004

### Prato 2005

D. Degli Innocenti, ed., *Jeans! Le origini, il mito americano, il made in Italy* (Prato, Museo del tessuto, 22 June-30 November 2005), Florence, 2005

### Chambéry, Le Havre, Reims 2005-2006

*Autour de Giacomo Francesco Cipper. Gens d'Italie aux XVII<sup>e</sup> et XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècles* (Chambéry, Musée des Beaux-Arts, 19 March-13 June 2005; Le Havre, Musée Malraux, 25 June-18 September 2005; Reims, Musée des Beaux-Arts, 5 October 2005-8 January 2006), Lyon, 2005

### London 2006

Massimo Pulini. *Diacromie* (London, Italian Cultural Institute, 19 October-28 November 2006), Rome, 2006

### Milan 2006

F. Frangi and A. Morandotti, ed., *Maestri del '600 e del '700 lombardo nella Collezione Koelliker* (Milan, Palazzo Reale, 1 April-2 July 2006), Milan, 2006

### Brescia 2007

A. Orlando, ed., *Pietro Bellotti e dintorni. Dipinti veneti e lombardi tra realtà e "genere" dalla collezione Koelliker* (Brescia, Brixiantiquaria, 17-25 November 2007), *I quaderni di Brixiantiquaria*, VII, Brescia, 2007

### Milan 2007-2008

A. Di Lorenzo, F. Frangi, eds., *La raccolta Mario Scaglia. Dipinti e sculture, medaglie e placchette da Pisanello a Ceruti* (Milan, Poldi Pezzoli Museum, 30 October 2007-30 March 2008), Milan, 2007



#### **PHOTOGRAPHIC CREDITS**

Gemäldegalerie der Akademie  
der bildenden Künste, Wien: p. 33  
Thomas Hennocque: front and back covers,  
pp. 4, 6, 37, 39, 40, 43 (below), 45, 47, 49, 51  
Museum voor Schone Kunsten, Ghent: p. 41  
Fotostudio Rapuzzi, Brescia: pp. 55, 57  
Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid: p. 25  
Staatliche Museen, Gemäldegalerie, Berlin,  
Jörg P. Anders: p. 21  
Musée du Louvre, Paris: p. 17  
National Galleries of Scotland, Edinburgh: p. 21  
The publisher welcomes contact from copyright  
holders for any image whose source remains  
uncredited.

**GALERIE CANESSO**

26, rue Laffitte, 75009 Paris

Tél. : + 33 1 40 22 61 71

Fax : + 33 1 40 22 61 81

e-mail : [contact@canesso.com](mailto:contact@canesso.com)

[www.canesso.com](http://www.canesso.com)





Among the European painters of reality of the seventeenth century, the Master of the Blue Jeans holds a most original place, especially for his depictions of humble people clothed in Genoese twilled cotton, a more or less intense blue cloth known to us today by the international name of jeans. The small group of works assembled under this apparently anachronistic but highly effective name bears witness to his activity (at least in part) in Lombardy. His painting is silent and solemn, and heralds the career of Giacomo Ceruti, while harking back to illustrious predecessors such as Velázquez, Georges de La Tour, or the Le Nain brothers.

ISBN 978-2-9529848-4-3



9 782952 984843